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# PROJECT CHECO SOUTHEAST ASIA REPORT

## THE 1972 INVASION OF MILITARY REGION I: FALL OF QUANG TRI AND DEFENSE OF HUE

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**REPORT**

**THE 1972 INVASION  
OF MILITARY REGION I:  
FALL OF QUANG TRI AND DEFENSE OF HUE**

**15 MARCH 1973**

**HQ PACAF**

**Directorate of Operations Analysis  
CHECO/CORONA HARVEST DIVISION**

Prepared by:

**Capt David K. Mann**

**Project CHECO 7th AF (CDC)**

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The counterinsurgency and unconventional warfare environment of Southeast Asia has resulted in USAF airpower being employed to meet a multitude of requirements. These varied applications have involved the full spectrum of USAF aerospace vehicles, support equipment, and manpower. As a result, operational data and experiences have accumulated which should be collected, documented, and analyzed for current and future impact upon USAF policies, concepts, and doctrine.

Fortunately, the value of collecting and documenting our SEA experiences was recognized at an early date. In 1962, Hq USAF directed CINCPACAF to establish an activity which would provide timely and analytical studies of USAF combat operations in SEA and would be primarily responsive to Air Staff requirements and direction.

Project CHECO, an acronym for Contemporary Historical Examination of Current Operations, was established to meet the Air Staff directive. Managed by Hq PACAF, with elements in Southeast Asia, Project CHECO provides a scholarly "on-going" historical examination, documentation, and reporting on USAF policies, concepts, and doctrine in PACOM. This CHECO report is part of the overall documentation and examination which is being accomplished. It is an authentic source for an assessment of the effectiveness of USAF airpower in PACOM when used in proper context. The reader must view the study in relation to the events and circumstances at the time of its preparation--recognizing that it was prepared on a contemporary basis which restricted perspective and that the author's research was limited to records available within his local headquarters area.

*Robert E. Hiller*

ROBERT E. HILLER  
Director of Operations Analysis  
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## FOREWORD

The Fall of Quang Tri and the Defense of Hue is one in a series of Project CHECO Southeast Asia reports examining the role of airpower during the NVA 1972 offensive. One of the major thrusts of this offensive was in Military Region I. The North Vietnamese hoped to conquer Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces and then place them under their political as well as military control. This study traces the action of NVA forces and the response of allied forces to the invasion of MR I.

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## CHAPTER I

### OVERVIEW

On 30 March 1972, regular units of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) initiated a large scale offensive against fire support bases (FSBs) along the demilitarized zone (DMZ) in northern Quang Tri Province of Military Region One (MR I). As the enemy opened major drives into Kontum Province of MR II and Binh Long Province of MR III, it became clear that the initial attacks were part of a large-scale invasion. For the first time in the Vietnamese conflict, the NVA used a conventional military strategy, employing combined infantry, artillery, and armor tactics. The overall scope and intensity of the aggression surprised most official sources. In addition to the usual NVA/VC guerrilla hit and run assaults, ambushes, acts of harassment, sabotage, propaganda, and terrorism, the NVA added conventional tactics, weapons, and equipment.

The seriousness of the situation was fully recognized by the United States and South Vietnam, and both states acted to meet the challenge. All concerned realized that the major attacks in South Vietnam were a crucial test of Vietnamization and that everything possible must be done to successfully counter the NVA offensive. The South Vietnamese Joint General Staff (JGS) quickly deployed General Reserve Forces to reinforce the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) infantry divisions in high threat areas. The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) authorized the employment of Seventh Air Force (7AF) air assets and U.S. Naval gunfire (NGF)

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against enemy positions. The JCS also authorized the deployment of additional U.S. resources from other Pacific Command and United States (CONUS) locations.

The U.S. response to the NVA assault in MR I was predominantly air and consisted primarily of tactical air (TACAIR) strikes by USAF, USN, and USMC fighter-bombers, heavy bombardment by giant B-52 Arc Light bombers, and close air support, armed reconnaissance, and interdiction by fixed-wing gunships.

The struggle in MR I saw the loss of Quang Tri Province, with the defeated forces falling back toward Hue, solidifying their positions, and then pushing back toward Quang Tri City. The turning point was at Hue, where defensive positions surrounding the Imperial City in Thua Thien Province held against repeated assaults, at first blunting, and ultimately reversing, the enemy progress in MR I.

The eventual victory in defense of Hue scored by government forces was a team effort. The Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF), facing NVA units without the assistance of U.S. ground combat troops, fought well in defense of their nation. Vietnamization, in terms of the capability of Republic of Vietnam (RVN) ground and air military forces to confront and withstand the Communist surge, had proven itself a success. Still, the role of U.S. airpower was a vital, deciding factor in the overall offensive. General John W. Vogt, Jr., Deputy COMUSMACV and Commander, 7AF, asserted that airpower was a major force in defeating the invasion.<sup>1/</sup>

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The effectiveness of air, combined with the stiffening resolve of the ARVN, forced the enemy to mass. And when massed, air could strike ideal targets for the first time in the offensive. Instead of trying to locate guerrillas dispersed in hamlets and hidden throughout the countryside, tactical air resources were <sup>now</sup> able to attack troop concentrations and mechanized units massed in great strength.

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## CHAPTER II

### OFFENSIVE INDICATORS

On the eve of the offensive, intelligence information did not clearly indicate North Vietnam's (NVN) overall goals or plan of execution. Available intelligence, however, indicated that attacks would most likely occur in Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces of MR I, and Kontum and Pleiku Provinces of MR II.<sup>2/</sup> One NVA prisoner revealed that in late March, 1972, he had been informed that the goals of the forthcoming NVA offensive included the following: demonstrating to the RVN Government the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong's (VC) determination to fight and defeat ARVN in the field; to gain new territory to place under the NVN flag on Ho Chi Minh's 83rd birthday on 19 May; and to end the war.<sup>3/</sup> To attain these goals, the NVA would launch a general offensive at the end of March. They regarded the offensive as one of "the greatest strategic decisions," which required close coordination between all civilian and military groups in sympathy with, or directly supporting, the North Vietnamese government.<sup>4/</sup> In MR I, the plans called for the "liberation" of Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces, as well as the establishment of a local government to control the population. The cities of Quang Tri and Hue would be primary objectives.<sup>5/</sup>

Confirming other intelligence sources was allied observation of increased NVA logistics activity during the dry season preceding the offensive. In western Quang Tri Province, enemy construction had continued on the route networks connecting Laos and South Vietnam, and, in

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spite of continuous air interdiction, considerable NVA traffic flowed into Quang Tri Province via Route 9.<sup>6/</sup> (See Figure 1.) In Thua Thien Province, sensor activations and visual reconnaissance indicated increased enemy logistics activity in the A Shau Valley and an expedited flow of goods south into western Quang Nam Province. While the major activity was concentrated in the most northern provinces of MR I, enemy construction crews and transportation units were active throughout the region.<sup>7/</sup>

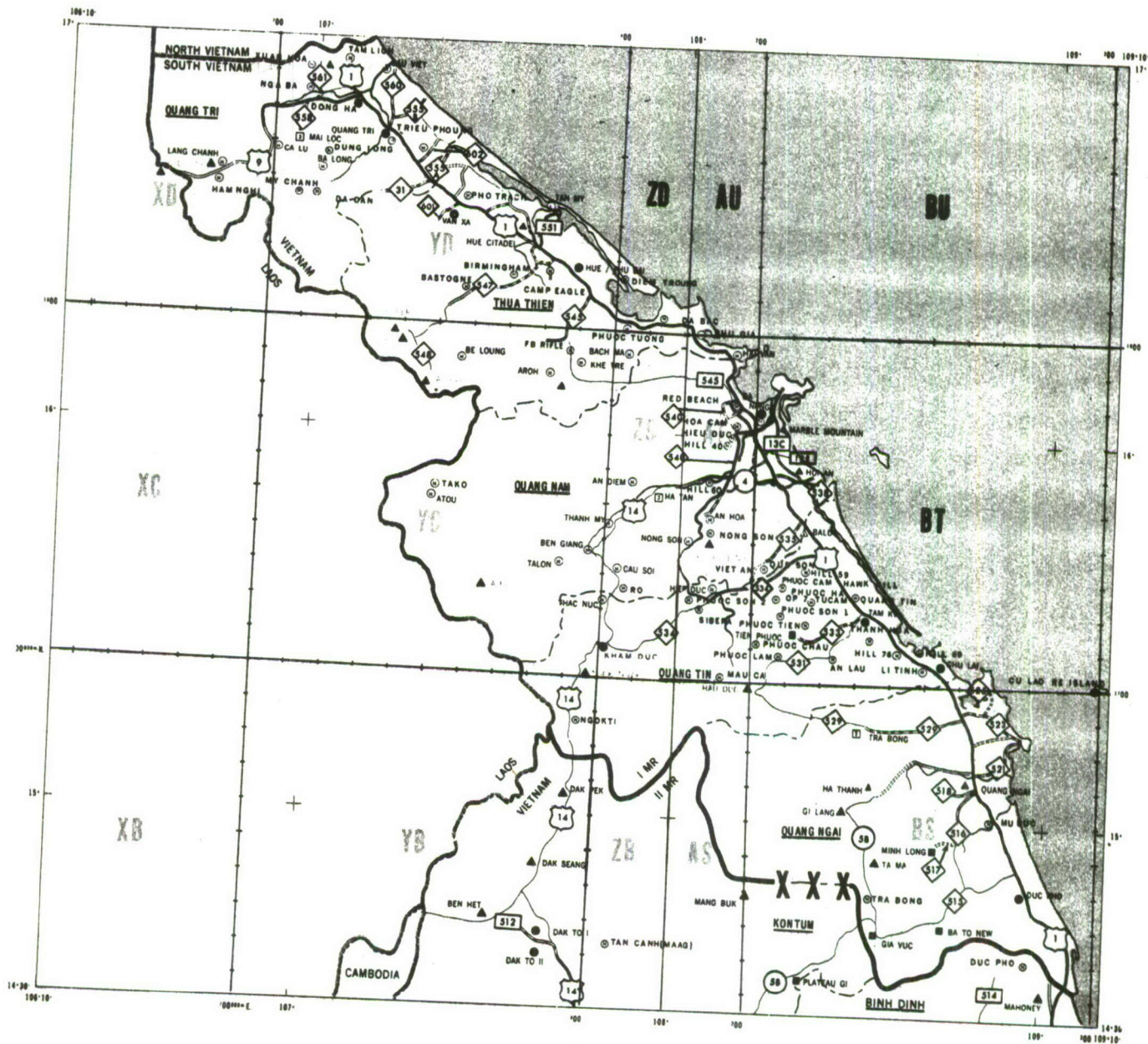
In an effort designed to protect the logistics activities from air interdiction efforts, the enemy intensified and expanded their air defense system, which included both anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) and surface-to-air missiles (SAMs). At least six AAA regiments were located in or near MR I, and the NVA also integrated AAA weapons into regular artillery, armored, or other units.<sup>8/</sup>

In addition to troop and supply movements, intelligence sources detected increased amounts of enemy equipment moving in and around MR I, including the long range 130mm field guns.<sup>9/</sup> Numerous enemy tanks (of several types) also appeared in, above, and below the DMZ. Therefore, the NVA's use of tanks in MR I was predictable; however, the numbers actually employed were significantly greater than the official pre-offensive estimate of 208.<sup>10/</sup>

Underscoring the intelligence information which indicated a possible offensive, the number of enemy-initiated combat incidents in MR I steadily increased. In retrospect, these incidents probably not only presaged, but

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MR I Major Road Net and Airfields

FIGURE 1

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also were an early part of the offensive plan in MR I.<sup>11/</sup> As early as 29 January, elements of the 31st and 84th NVA regiments conducted mixed rocket, mortar, and ground attacks against A-3 and C-2 FSBs in northern Quang Tri Province. On 30 January, Camp Carroll, located near Mai Loc, was hit by 49 122mm rockets. (See Figure 2.) In February, enemy activity continued to escalate in both Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces, which the VC had designated Military Region Tri-Thien-Hue. Two NVA regiments began activities southwest of Hue, and, on 13 February, the enemy initiated attacks by fire (ABF) on FSB Bastogne. This attack consisted of 30 82mm mortar rounds. FSB Rifle received 150 82mm mortar rounds, which were followed by a ground attack on 17 February. The pattern of increasing enemy activity continued in March. Few FSB locations were spared from enemy attack activity. Over 500 incidents occurred throughout MR I during the 60 days prior to the commencement of the offensive.<sup>12/</sup> During this time, the NVA avoided troop contact with ARVN forces while preparing for future tactical activity.

As in other areas of South Vietnam, government forces expected an offensive, but evidence remained inconclusive as to the scope and definite plans of the North Vietnamese. The enemy-initiated combat incidents and the logistics activity seemed to indicate that MR I was a target. Some sources suggested that the attack could come as early as Tet (14 February), while others indicated it might occur as late as July because of allied interdiction efforts which, they thought, had altered the enemy's timetable. Others, including some "senior Pentagon officials" and ARVN

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generals, believed no offensive would come before the end of March.<sup>13/</sup>  
Despite the lack of agreement concerning the time frame of the enemy offensive, the consensus nevertheless indicated an all-out NVN effort. Consequently, the allies conducted ground and air campaigns designed to disrupt enemy plans.

In the ground phase of the allied interdiction campaign, all three ARVN divisions in MR I sought to reduce the mounting enemy pressure, to disrupt enemy preparations for the predicted offensive, and to establish ARVN in favorable positions for further government offensive actions.<sup>14/</sup>

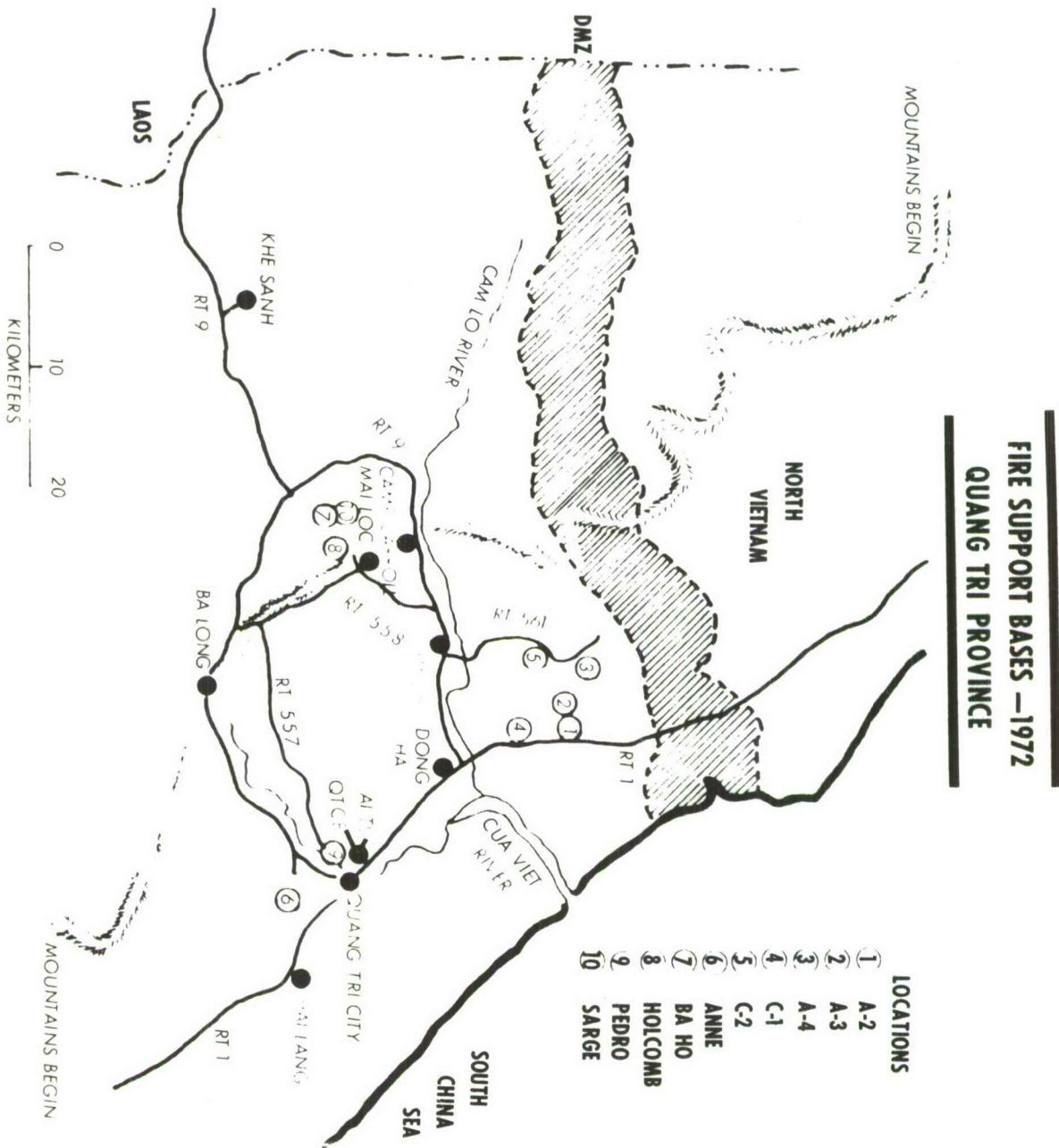
On 5 March, the 1st ARVN Division initiated an interdiction effort, called Lam Son 45, in western Thua Thien Province. Targeted against suspected enemy movements out of the A Shau Valley into a staging area north of Route 547, the specific mission was to clear the areas south of FSB Rakkason and southwest of FSB Bastogne of NVA and VC units.<sup>15/</sup> While gathering battle damage assessment (BDA) resulting from Arc Light (B-52) strikes near Dong Cu Mong, ARVN confirmed that a major enemy buildup was in progress in the area. Indications were that the ultimate enemy mission was to disrupt pacification in the lowlands of Thua Thien and to seize Hue. Other ARVN probing actions in conjunction with Lam Son 45 received significant resistance from enemy forces; this further confirmed the buildup.<sup>16/</sup>

The 1st ARVN Division claimed the Lam Son 45 action had preempted enemy plans for coordinated attacks against their units around FSB Bastogne. The U.S. Army Senior Advisor to the ARVN 1st Division, Col

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FIGURE 2



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Hiliman Dickinson, credited airpower for outstanding support in the operation. Forty Arc Light strikes in a tactical support role, as well as U.S. and South Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) TACAIR, reduced enemy resistance and impeded the flow of enemy supplies and equipment. Although accurate battle damage assessment (BDA) figures were not available, Col Dickinson estimated that aerial support took a heavy toll.<sup>17/</sup>

In addition to supporting the ground attempts to forestall the NVA offensive, allied airpower was already engaged in a major operation called Commando Hunt VII. As in other annual odd-numbered Commando Hunt interdiction campaigns, the principal object was to inhibit the flow of supplies and equipment from Laos to enemy forces in South Vietnam during the dry season. Now the object was not only to stop resupply intended to sustain NVA troops in the field, but to halt the greatly increased flow of men and materials required for a major offensive.

Commando Hunt VII attempted to secure allied goals by continued attacks on Laotian passes with B-52s and TACAIR strikes to keep material from entering South Vietnam. Targets discovered enroute to the passes or already in South Vietnam were engaged and destroyed by TACAIR and gunships. Wherever necessary to support the interdiction effort, gunships and F-4s teamed to conduct AAA suppression missions.<sup>18/</sup>

A new development during the 1971-1972 dry season interdiction campaign was the expanded air defense posture of the enemy in the DMZ area. Both AAA and SAMs posed a serious threat to interdiction efforts in the

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vicinity of the MR I entry routes. By 19 March, the AAA included 23mm and 37mm weapons grouped to comprise at least six high threat AAA areas.<sup>19/</sup>

In the long run, the appearance of the SA-2 (SAM) missile in MR I was far more critical. In early February, 12 SAM sites were identified in areas near the DMZ, and four approximately 10 NM north of the DMZ.<sup>20/</sup> With an effective envelope of up to 60,000 feet, the introduction of SAMs ended the permissive environment required for the truck-killing AC-130 gunship. This point was forcefully underscored on 28 March when an SA-2 missile launched from the Tchepone area, west of the DMZ, struck an AC-130 gunship. As a result of this loss, 7AF declared a "missile ring" in the Tchepone area. It was obvious to the gunship specialists that the NVA was using the SAMs to restrict gunship combat operations and thus to hasten and increase the flow of supplies in the South.<sup>21/</sup> As evidenced by the amounts of equipment used by enemy forces during the spring offensive, the deployment of AAA and SAMs was undoubtedly a contributing factor to the initial NVA battle successes.

In other related actions, 7AF launched a major air effort against selected 130mm field artillery pieces, surface-to-surface rocket sites, and enemy logistic complexes within 4 NM of the DMZ/North Vietnam border. These were in addition to efforts directed against SAM sites in Route Pack I of southern North Vietnam.<sup>22/</sup>

The overall impact of allied activity such as the Commando Hunt VII and Lam Son 45 operations on the enemy buildup can only be estimated. Considering the strength displayed by NVA forces during the invasion of MR I, it is tempting to discredit these interdiction efforts. The

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allied operations described above, however, may have prevented an enemy buildup that would have totally overwhelmed the ARVN forces which were not prepared to cope with a major invasion.

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### CHAPTER III

#### OPENING ATTACKS ON QUANG TRI PROVINCE

On 30 March 1972, the anticipated NVN offensive began in Quang Tri Province. A large, well-coordinated attacking force, estimated to be three divisions plus supporting units, launched heavy attacks in MR I. One of these division-sized units crossed the DMZ from North Vietnam, while the other two, already operating in-country, launched attacks against friendly fire support bases north and west of Quang Tri City. Heavy artillery barrages preceded the NVA troop advances, which were supported by tanks, artillery, and mobile AAA and SAM batteries.<sup>23/</sup>

To overcome the allied airpower advantage, the enemy apparently planned the start of the offensive to coincide with the adverse weather conditions of the Northwest Monsoon Season. This weather pattern severely restricted the application of close air support by U.S. and VNAF air resources during the opening days of the offensive.<sup>24/</sup>

A series of coordinated attacks against fire support bases and other small combat bases heralded the offensive. Hundreds of 122mm rockets, 130mm rounds, and other ordnance were fired against friendly positions at FSBs Sarge, Holcomb, Fuller, A-2, A-4, C-1, and C-2, as well as combat bases located at Ba Ho, Mai Loc, and Dong Ha.<sup>25/</sup> (See Figure 2.) In most cases, the NVA followed the preparatory fire with attacks by ground units supported by T-54, T-34, and PT-76 tanks. While tanks were present almost everywhere, tank activity was especially prevalent in the Dong Ha area.<sup>26/</sup> While the

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RVNAF needed air support desperately, many difficulties in providing such support arose because of the marginal weather.

Early on the evening of 30 March, a request was forwarded by the South Vietnamese Marine Corps (VNMC) 8th Battalion at FSB Holcomb for a flare ship and gunship. A USAF AC-119 "Stinger" arrived on station and orbited for one and one-half hours. U.S. Marine advisors exposed themselves to intense enemy artillery fire in an attempt to use a transponder to direct the aircraft. However, the Stinger was unable to lock onto the ground beacon, and thereby lost its all-weather effectiveness. The use of an infrared strobe did enable the aircraft to locate the target area, drop ground flares, and fire on enemy positions, but when the weather deteriorated further, Stinger could not continue its support. <sup>27/</sup>

On the morning of 31 March, a USAF Forward Air Controller (FAC) flew in the FSB Sarge and Ba Ho areas and, despite marginal weather, attempted to locate enemy artillery firing positions. Through the FAC's assistance, friendly 155mm batteries at Mai Loc were able to fire on suspected gun positions and suppress enemy fire. Throughout the day, large-sized enemy units were sighted on all sides of Sarge and Ba Ho, and several enemy ground attacks stalled under the withering fire of FAC-directed close air support. One ground advisor called in a strike 200 meters from friendly positions, but later the poor weather prohibited additional TACAIR strikes against troop concentrations. In such instances, strikes were then placed on suspected artillery positions. <sup>28/</sup> Under such

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conditions, often the only useable airpower were Arc Light and TACAIR missions employing Combat Skyspot and Long Range Navigation (LORAN). While useful, this support was not as effective as the full tactical inventory under visual flight conditions. <sup>29/</sup>

The steady NVA pressure, curtained from friendly airpower by dusky clouds, fog, and drizzle, was overwhelming against the relatively weak outlying bases. The first position to fall was FSB Holcomb. By 1 April, the NVA had forced the evacuation of most fire support bases, and as a consequence, friendly positions were consolidated in two separate areas: (1) Camp Carroll, Mai Loc, Cam Lo; and (2) Dong Ha and Quang Tri cities. <sup>30/</sup> By 2 April, the enemy had forced the evacuation of FSBs A-2, A-4, C-1, and C-2 in the north, and FSBs Fuller, Holcomb, and Sarge in the west. Late the same day, ARVN forces surrendered Camp Carroll, located just north of Mai Loc, after intense artillery and ground attacks. With the loss of Camp Carroll and its artillery support, VNMC elements at Mai Loc were forced to withdraw toward Quang Tri City. <sup>31/</sup>

Within a week, the outer fire support bases were totally overrun and the friendly units were forced back into defensive positions which were 11 KM in diameter and encompassed Dong Ha and Quang Tri Cities. RVNAF forces, supported by U.S. air strikes and naval gunfire, fought to stem the tide of the powerful enemy assault. TACAIR, however, was hampered by poor visibility. Only when the weather began to improve were VNAF and U.S. air resources able to engage enemy tank and truck columns in an attempt to stabilize the situation. <sup>32/</sup>

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Although the enemy maintained steady pressure on the Dong Ha-Quang Tri area, by 5 April there was a general decrease of enemy-initiated activity. This was probably the result of the need to reposition artillery and replenish ammunition supplies. Concurrently, improved weather conditions permitted a significant increase in TACAIR strikes.<sup>33/</sup>

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#### CHAPTER IV

#### PREPARATION FOR THE BATTLE FOR QUANG TRI CITY

The attack on and subsequent fall of the fire support bases in MR I caused official concern and resulted in actions designed to help defend Quang Tri City. Additional troops arrived to strengthen defenses around Dong Ha and Quang Tri, and the RVNAF conducted limited counter-offensive search operations to keep the NVA from fashioning a solid force to hurl against Quang Tri. The JGS ordered General Lam, the I Corps (MR I) Commander, to hold the defensive line at Dong Ha. With the assistance of U.S. fire support, the Saigon command was confident that government forces could stop any concerted drive on the major cities. <sup>34/</sup>

One of the first actions the JGS took in MR I was to deploy forces in areas that looked especially vulnerable. Already in place, and in operational control of Quang Tri Province, was the ARVN 3d Infantry Division, supported by three battalions of the 147th VNMC Brigade and the local territorial forces, both regional and popular (RF/PF). <sup>35/</sup> Joint Strategic Reserve Forces shifted north from Saigon included the 369th VNMC Brigade and the three-group task force of the RVNAF Ranger Command. In addition, the 1st Armor Brigade deployed to Quang Tri City from Camp Evans in Thua Thien Province. <sup>36/</sup> In another action, the Armor Command activated the 20th Tank Regiment and deployed it under the operational control of the 3d Infantry Division to the area between Dong Ha and Cam Lo. Its mission was to clear and occupy the high ground of Route 9 and to keep

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the road open by disrupting enemy forces.<sup>37/</sup> Principal VNAF support came from the VNAF 1st Air Division at Da Nang AB. That support included seven squadrons: two A-37 fighter, two O-1/U-17 liaison, and three UH-1 helicopter gunship squadrons. VNAF A-1, AC-47, and AC-119 strike sorties originated at bases outside MR I.<sup>38/</sup>

In order for the USAF to provide adequate fire support to General Lam's forces, some problems had to be resolved. Progress in Vietnamization, and continued U.S. redeployments, had resulted in VNAF flying and directing the majority of air missions in MR I, virtually eliminating the tactical air control structure formerly used by U.S. forces to coordinate air and ground operations.<sup>39/</sup> When the offensive began, ground units constantly requested air support from the ARVN 3d Division Headquarters. Consequently, the role of the USAF officer assigned as the VNAF Air Liaison advisor (ALO) assumed major importance. The ALO was the senior VNAF advisor to the ARVN commander and participated in all operational planning. He advised and assisted in the use of air support, development of air requests, deployment of Tactical Air Control Parties (TACPs), and transmitted to the Direct Air Support Center (DASC) all immediate requests. He also ensured adequate FAC coverage and coordinated air support with the Fire Support Coordination Center (FSCC).<sup>40/</sup> With the reinitiation of large scale U.S. TACAIR operations in MR I, it became necessary for the Tactical Air Control System (TACS) to become an American operation. Thus, rather than merely advising the VNAF on aspects of air operations, the USAF advisors actually controlled the application of airpower in MR I. The existing air request

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net (see Figure 3) placed the 3d Division American ALO, Major David Brookbank, in a unique position. Because of the seriousness of the Quang Tri situation and the need for immediate action, Major Brookbank began handling air requests from all units in contact with the 3d Division's ground and air operation sections and from other U.S. field advisors. The presence of an American ALO was to be of immeasurable value as the campaign wore on.<sup>41/</sup>

With the fall of the forward bases, and with the weather precluding observation aircraft from verifying the ground situation, targeting became a critical problem. The VNMC Brigades maintained a constant flow of data concerning enemy positions in their G-2 intelligence sections. This was necessary in order to formulate suitable targets for the B-52s, TACAIR Skyspot strikes, and artillery fire support. In several instances, the data which had been forwarded to the I DASC at DaNang was the basis for successfully diverting Skyspot strikes against enemy units. However, during the retreat of friendly units, the U.S. intelligence system was virtually "blind." Radio intercept stations were overrun at FSBs Sarge and Fuller. Sensor readout facilities were lost at C-1 and FSB Fuller, and the cables and antennas at the Quang Tri Combat Base (QTCB) command facilities were cut by incoming enemy artillery. In spite of such difficulties, targeting was completed and the results, though limited, were rewarding.<sup>42/</sup> Because of the poor weather, the number of Skyspot and LORAN requests submitted by RVNAF units was "astronomical." The first list submitted by Major Brookbank from the 3d ARVN to I DASC

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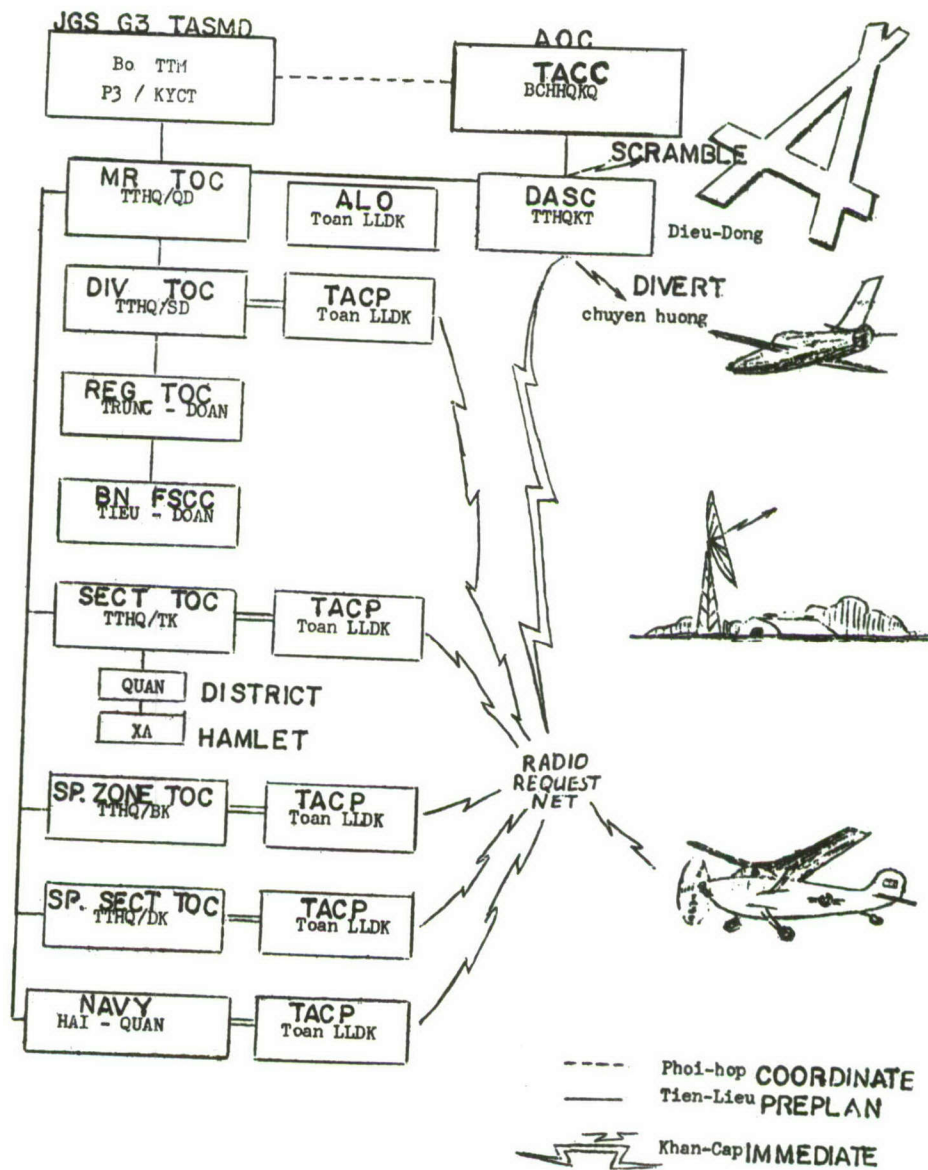
contained 100 targets, most based on estimates and not valid intelligence. Suspected enemy troop locations were the most frequent targets described; <sup>43/</sup> very few pre-planned sorties were requested for hard targets.

Another difficulty was that of securing military clearances to strike immediate targets. Primarily because of communication problems, some requests were never forwarded through ARVN channels, resulting in some targets not being struck. Ideally, the 3d ARVN staff and U.S. advisors located at the Quang Tri Citadel would pass mission requests and intelligence over the secure net to the U.S. Army Tactical Operations Center (TOC) officer at QTCB; he, in turn, would relay them to the USAF Tactical Air Control Party attached to the 3d Division for relay to I-DASC. One example of clearance <sup>44/</sup> difficulties which occurred on 1 April, was related by Major Brookbank:

The freshly abandoned center bunker at FSB C-2 was being used as the NVA command post for the entire attack at this time. Gen Giai and the senior advisor wanted this target destroyed as an absolute first priority. At the time I-DASC seemed unresponsive to urgent requests for air support and seemed unaware of the seriousness of the situation. Continually pressed by 3d ARVN as to the air strike frag status, I was unable to attain the information through the land line. Finally making contact with Ramrod, the Airborne Battlefield Command and Control Center (ABCCC), we "blew our cool" and demanded the information go to the PACAF Commander-in-Chief. It's doubtful if the information got that far, but Ramrod confirmed bombs on target less than 45 minutes later which ended a total delay of 7.4 hours from initial request.

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VNAF Air Request Net

FIGURE 3

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On 2 April, one special problem on clearances to fire occurred when 7AF initiated a large scale Search and Rescue (SAR) effort, code named Bat 21, in the Cam Lo area. An EB-66 had been downed by an SA-2 missile. At first, 7AF set up a "no-fire" zone 27 KM in radius which virtually encompassed the entire area of operation (AO). With enemy divisions, including heavy artillery striking in the AO, the 3d ARVN were unable to return fire or request TACAIR in the area. Eventually, some specific targets were struck by air and ground artillery, but only after considerable delay in obtaining clearance. Although the "no-fire" zone was later reduced, the area covered the center of the main NVA offensive thrust. It was through this area that the enemy moved large concentrations of artillery, tanks, and infantry. Still, the advantage to which the enemy used the fire restriction can only be estimated. It is worth noting that extensive SAR fire support was directed against enemy targets in the restricted area.<sup>45/</sup>

The SAR mission was faced with new problems as a result of the NVA offensive. Because of the enemy environment, the normal SAR team could not operate effectively. As demonstrated in the Bat 21 mission, enemy artillery and weapon fire were serious threats to the slow-moving HH-53 Jolly Green helicopters, A-1 Sandy escort aircraft, and the OV-10 FACs. During the 11-day SAR effort (2 April to 13 April), SA-2 missiles downed two OV-10 FACs, and ground fire caused the loss of a Jolly Green and its entire crew.<sup>46/</sup> The enemy in the SAR area now numbered in the thousands. High caliber automatic weapons and even artillery replaced the normal

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ground fire. Consequently, the enemy threat dictated several changes in tactics. The suppression of enemy fire, previously handled by A-1 aircraft in a matter of hours, now required fast moving F-4 aircraft for perhaps days. The rescue attempts of a single EB-66 crewmember required as many as 90 TACAIR strikes per day to suppress enemy fire in order to enable the Sandy and Jolly Green team to rescue the survivor.

Despite such heroic efforts, air rescue was not possible in the Bat 21 effort, and the crewmember was eventually rescued on 13 April in a daring venture by a U.S. Marine team who arranged to secure the crewmember while he was floating down the Cam Lo River in a sampan. From this retrieval location, he was transferred to an armored personnel carrier and taken to a helicopter landing zone, where he was successfully air evacuated to DaNang. <sup>47/</sup>

The ultimate rescue, although not actually accomplished by the USAF SAR team, was nonetheless a dramatic demonstration of the contributions of air resources in rescuing downed crewmembers. The Bat 21 mission, which actually included several complementary missions, was possibly the most extensive SAR effort ever attempted in SEA by 7th Air Force. In addition to the normal SAR team components, it included TACAIR, reconnaissance (RECCE), and Arc Light missions.

However, the success of the SAR effort must be weighed against the effect this mission had on the overall situation in Quang Tri Province. According to Major Brookbank, "this SAR restriction gave the enemy an opportunity unprecedented in the annals of warfare to advance at will."

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The U.S. Marine advisors shared this opinion and asserted that the USAF requirement to impose a "no-fire" zone around the downed aircraft resulted in "a critical restriction upon the defensive fire support plan all along the Cam Lo River and Mai Loc Combat Base line."<sup>48/</sup>

In another instance, a SAR "no-fire" zone was established near FSB C-1 and Route 1, about 8 KM north of the Cua Viet River. This route was being heavily used by NVA tanks moving toward Dong Ha. U.S. advisors on the bridge at Dong Ha could observe the tanks moving south but were unable to fire into the zone. After 7AF lifted the restriction, the enemy was already south of the area in strength.<sup>49/</sup>

Another type of "no-fire" restriction was applied when short rounds or even possible short round reports were received. On 4 April, there was a reported short round striking a Vietnamese naval station located at the mouth of the Cua Viet River. A FAC had directed naval gunfire and subsequently TACAIR against seven enemy tanks fording a river. Four tanks were destroyed and three forced into retreat to the north. I-DASC called off the strikes when it somehow received word that friendly troops were being hit. The 3d Division TACP checked with the sector TACP and RF/PF forces in the area, and learned that only one man was wounded in the engagement and that the probable cause of the casualty was from NVA tank or artillery fire. Neither the 3d Division nor territorial force command was concerned about the incident.<sup>50/</sup> It is easy to see how confusion could occur concerning short rounds during the beginning of the offensive. The

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weather hampered effective FAC coverage and made it difficult to accurately identify ground situations from the air. Another factor was that the retreat patterns of friendly forces were generally disorganized or, at least, inadequately communicated to headquarters level.

Outside these "no-fire" areas, naval gunfire, coordinated with aerial fire support, struck at hostile troop concentrations and military equipment. NGF was a vital aspect of U.S. fire support. After the fall of the firebases, NGF was directed from QTCB on advancing units. U.S. Marine observers, members of the Naval Gunfire Air Spot Team, flying in VNAF L-19 Bird Dog aircraft, were able to spot for NGF by ducking through breaks in cloud cover, and by flying at extremely low and hazardous altitudes.<sup>51/</sup> By 10 April, the USMC observers were transferred to DaNang AB and began flying with the USAF 20th Tactical Air Support Squadron (TASS). 7AF, upon request from MACV, agreed to furnish up to 42 OV-10 flight hours daily, weather allowing. This support by the USAF FACs provided continuous dawn-to-dusk coverage for both the 1st and 3d ARVN Division AO. Later, during the height of activity at Quang Tri City, the FACs also flew night missions when this became necessary due to the increased enemy pressure.<sup>52/</sup> With the assistance of the spotters, NGF was directed against tank formations and massed enemy personnel along the beach areas. Although the coastal region was a primary target area, NGF was capable of firing inland beyond Route 1 in MR I. However, the USN destroyers and cruisers, located 5 km off the coast, began receiving heavy, though sporadic, enemy counter-fire.<sup>53/</sup>

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Meanwhile, on 6 April the weather improved considerably, opening the way for increased numbers of TACAIR sorties. From this point up to and including the actual attack on Quang Tri, the NVA tended to avoid revealing their positions to TACAIR during periods of good visibility and were considerably more aggressive under cloudy skies with low ceilings.<sup>54/</sup>

In several instances, the enemy took advantage of low ceilings to launch attacks in the Dong Ha area and at FSB Pedro, southwest of Quang Tri City. For instance, FSB Pedro came under heavy attacks at 0530 on 9 April by tanks and infantry when the weather prevented TACAIR strikes. Vietnamese Marines defending the base destroyed 13 enemy tanks.<sup>55/</sup>

Even when air support was not available, the RVNAF "seemed to be doing better." In a strategic move during the battle, the VNMC withdrew all but a single platoon from the FSB, and, after the enemy advanced, successfully counterattacked. General Lam, Commander, MR I, was elated over the VNMC action in the FSB Pedro engagement, especially because it had been achieved without U.S. fire support.<sup>56/</sup> In addition, the enemy probing actions in the Dong Ha area were contained by elements of the 3d ARVN, Ranger Command, and 1st Armored Command. Closer to Quang Tri City, the VNMC defeated enemy attempts to cut off Ai Tu Air Field and QTCB. Despite the RVNAF defensive actions, however, there was no apparent change in enemy objectives. Captured documents indicated that three regiments of the NVA 304th Division, supported by the 203d Armored Regiment and the 38th Artillery Regiment, still planned to seize Quang Tri City and set up a "Province Capital" there.<sup>57/</sup>

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The decrease of enemy activity in central and eastern Quang Tri Province indicated the enemy was repositioning artillery and building up ammunition supplies. Sensors in the DMZ detected tracked vehicles near abandoned FSB A-4 and much truck movement near Khe Sanh. Movements in the A Shau Valley were the heaviest ever recorded by sensors.<sup>58/</sup> USAF RF-4C photo reconnaissance missions also revealed enemy resupply efforts. In one instances, 15 tanks, 13 trucks, and one armored personnel carrier were shown moving toward Dong Ha. Reports of this type continued up to the major assault on Quang Tri City.<sup>59/</sup>

To help retard this movement and to provide more accurate target planning, the 3d ARVN Division developed an Arc Light target plan that covered the entire area from Dong Ha south to Quang Tri and west to a line running south from the Cam Lo area to the Ba Long valley. Over 200 target boxes, which enabled ground commanders to request strikes by target number, were designated. Most of the Arc Light strikes were extremely effective due to many NVA concentrations and the capability for last minute target changes. On 9 April, an Arc Light strike near Dong Ha, as reported by the Province Chief, destroyed three artillery pieces and 27 tanks.<sup>60/</sup>

Although the request time for targets from I-DASC to the units during this hectic period was limited, RVNAF managed to provide the necessary information. In the words of one U.S. Marine advisor:<sup>61/</sup>

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The only minor problem was that it seemed the Air Force always wanted everything in fifteen minutes or less. We would get a call from DaNang (I-DASC) telling us they wanted our B-52 requests in fifteen minutes, or where were the Skyspot requests? Needless to say, it was done. We would have given them anything to continue the great support we were getting.

During this phase of the battle for Quang Tri Province, the 3d Division requested the seeding of MK-36 magnetic influence mines.<sup>62/</sup> The purpose was tank area denial on three heavily traveled routes: (1) the main road network from the Ba Long Valley towards Mai Loc and Quang Tri; (2) the bridge area near Camp Carroll on route 9; and (3) the point where route 9 turns east and bends toward Cam Lo. Effective interdiction of these critical supply routes might have been able to restrict, if not totally stop, the enemy tanks. Unfortunately, most of the requests, as executed by U.S. TACAIR, utilized MK-82 bombs with the FMU-72 long-delay fuses. USAF FACs observed that the ordnance of these missions reportedly fraged with MK-36s detonated upon impact. These observations led U.S. advisors to conclude that "the FMU-72 fuse was completely useless in stopping tanks or for anything other than chance harassment." Ironically, TACAIR missions seeded an area on 13 April with the MK-36s that the 3d ARVN had not requested. In fact, "the mined area" was the center of the final objective in the ARVN counteroffensive plan slated to begin the following day. As the situation developed, NVA tanks were able to advance virtually unchecked through the routes leading to Quang Tri City.<sup>63/</sup>

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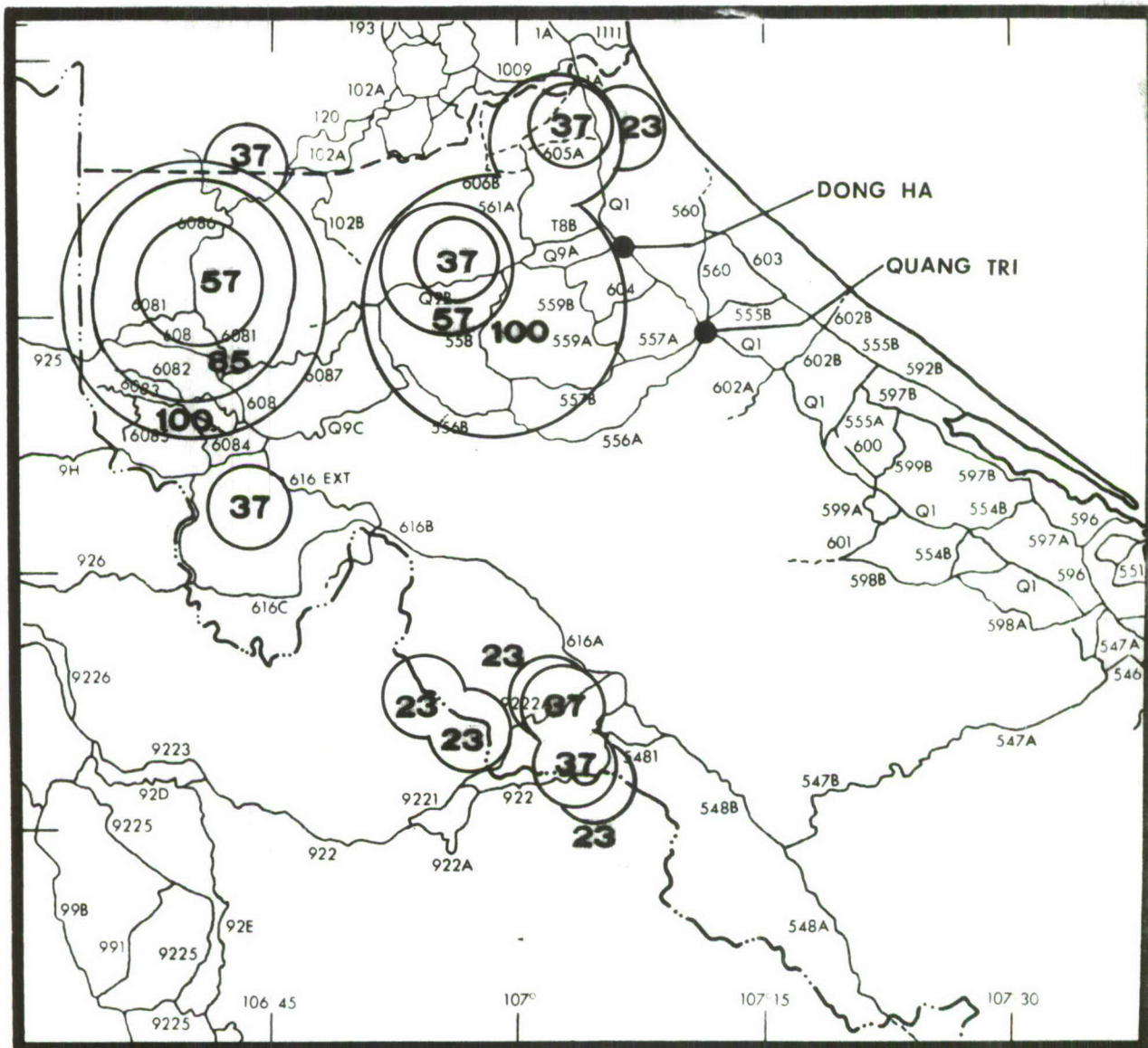
Another coordination problem was the difficulty in convincing the ARVN staff that remote, suspected troop locations, troops in the open, and moving tanks were poor targets for a Skyspot strike due to the changing nature of the target, the limited availability of radar, and the amount of time required to process the mission.<sup>64/</sup>

High-intensity AAA and SAM deployment threatened TACAIR and B-52 support. Never before had AAA fire been as intense in RVN. Pilots reported it to be of the same magnitude as encountered in the Hanoi area. Seventh Air Force established 12 high-threat areas in MR I during April, later raising the total to 19. (See Figure 4.) On 12 April, TAC recon photography identified three 100mm and three 85mm weapons located in an area approximately 7 NM south of the DMZ. It was believed that the NVA introduced these large-caliber weapons into RVN to increase their harassment capability against B-52s.<sup>65/</sup> Also, on one day alone, the NVA launched 24 SAMs from the DMZ area at an F-4, an OV-10, a Navy A-6, and three B-52 cells.<sup>66/</sup> While these SAMs were not effective, on 8 April, in the DMZ area, an SA-2 missile struck a B-52, damaging its left wing and fuselage. The aircraft aborted its mission and landed successfully at DaNang Air Base.<sup>67/</sup>

Commenting on the SA-2 missile used to defend NVA troops operating south of the DMZ, Lt Col O'Gorman, Commander of the 421st Tactical Fighter Squadron (F-4 Phantom) at DaNang stated:<sup>68/</sup>

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AAA High Threat Areas - MR I

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The SA-2 missiles are a major threat for the first time ever inside South Vietnam. They [the NVA] are towing anti-aircraft guns behind trucks right down the road and then they fire SAMs at us to force us down into the anti-aircraft fire. The SAMs are firing from the DMZ area at planes across the border.

On 14 April, ARVN forces launched a series of limited counter-offensive actions. Moving west from the vicinity of Quang Tri and Dong Ha Combat Bases, ARVN forces clashed with the enemy west of Dong Ha three times, and twice near FSB Anne (south of Quang Tri City). There were also significant contacts southeast of Cam Lo and west of Ai Tu and Hai Lang Bases. Progress was slow, however, and no large scale encounters resulted. U.S. and VNAF TACAIR provided close air support;<sup>69/</sup> however, the majority of the air sorties still were flown against suspected artillery positions and resupply operations.<sup>70/</sup>

The pattern of cautious RVNAF probing actions continued, but friendly units made little headway against enemy concentrations. With the availability of TACAIR, it appeared that the ARVN would be able to retake lost territory and carry the battle to the enemy. Such, however, was not the case, for the ARVN often failed to take the initiative. For example, in one counteroffensive operation, the ARVN were holding a bridge to the west of Quang Tri against enemy forces. U.S. TACAIR continuously pounded the area within 300 meters of friendly troops throughout the night and with increased intensity in the morning. Then, TACAIR ceased and NGF and ARVN artillery carried on the assault. The action destroyed seven enemy tanks and forced the NVA to retreat. After this "softening up," the ARVN failed

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to take the initiative and committed only two companies of infantry and one tank troop against the enemy's two regiments. The result: an inconclusive engagement. According to Major Brookbank, "most of the ARVN plans [for the counteroffensive] would have succeeded had the ground commanders initiated action to take advantage of the massive air support provided."<sup>71/</sup>

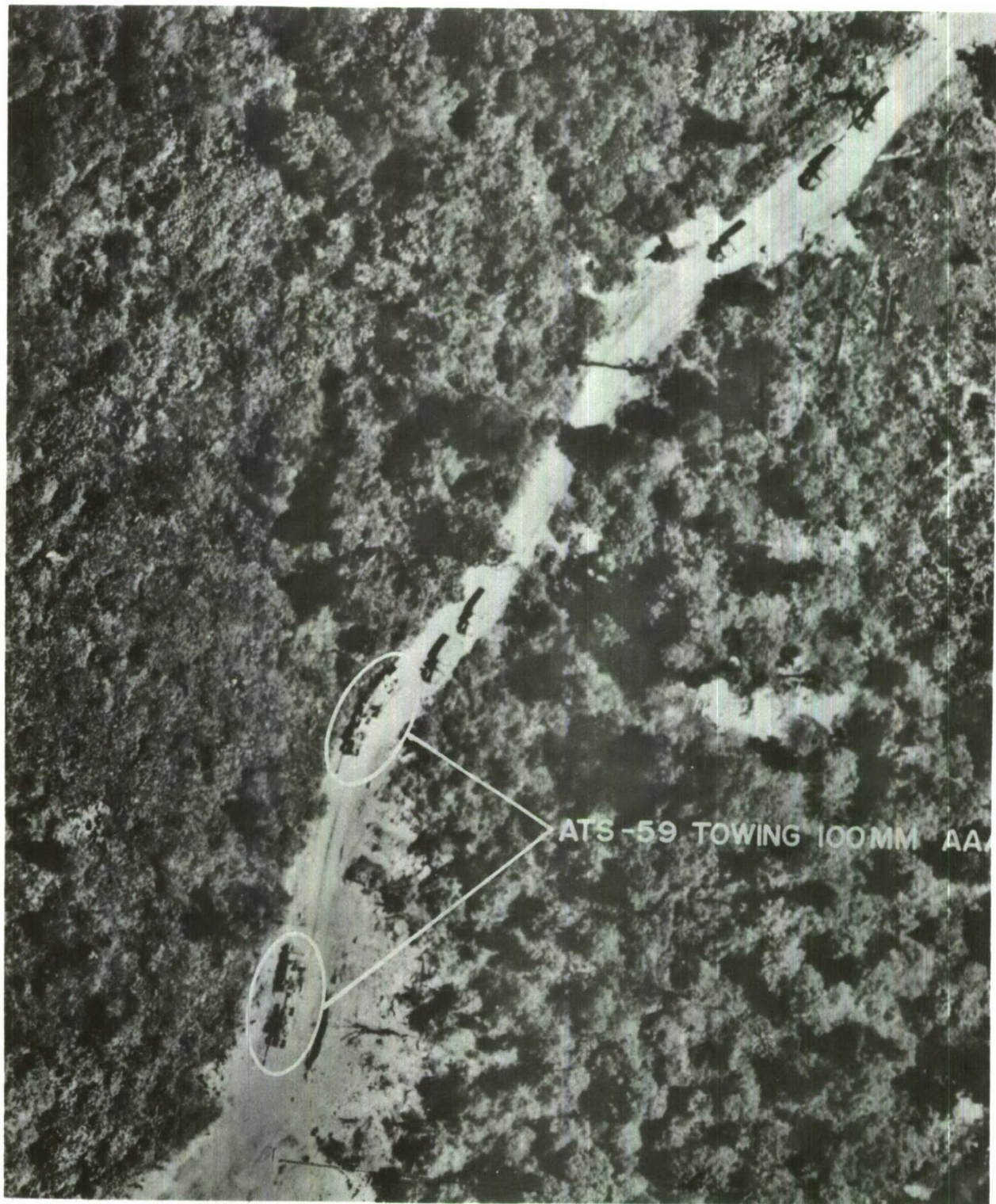
One demoralizing factor for U.S. pilots and advisors was the ARVN refusal to fire mortars in fear of revealing their position. Instead, the ARVN insisted on complete destruction of the enemy by air. As noted by one field U.S. Marine advisor: "I have found that the Vietnamese do not have a firm grasp of [the] concepts of close air support and fire support coordination. They want all the air they can get, but they do not understand the types of ordnance available nor how to employ it."<sup>72/</sup> It was often the airborne FAC who effectively coordinated the application of air-power in critical combat situations.

USAF FACs did an outstanding job covering large areas and directing several strike sorties per flight in the hostile environment. The 20th TASS was responsible for the U.S. FAC (slow mover) missions in MR I. FACs controlled TACAIR strikes, conducted visual reconnaissance of the infiltration routes, directed ARVN ground artillery, and spotted for U.S. Navy vessels in the Gulf of Tonkin.<sup>73/</sup> OV-10 Bronco Aircraft, call sign "Trail," flew the FAC missions in Quang Tri Province. "Bilk" FACs supported the Thua Thien area with O-2 aircraft. "Helix" O-2 operations provided FAC coverage in Quang Nam and Quang Tin Provinces.<sup>74/</sup>

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ATS-59 Towing 100mm AAA

FIGURE 5

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In addition to the "slow-mover" FACs, F-4 Phantoms directed air strikes against enemy targets in the high threat areas of MR I. The F-4s flew at high speeds and low altitudes in areas where enemy air defenses posed serious SAM and AAA threats to slower FAC aircraft. These FAC F-4s were armed with a 20mm cannon, and equipped with rocket pods capable of firing smoke rockets to mark targets. After visual contact with a flight of strike aircraft, the FAC rolled in on the target and fired smoke rockets to mark the target area and advised the strike leader to "hit my smoke." Split second timing was required, for the strike flight zeroed in on the billowing smoke to drop ordnance as soon as the FAC cleared the target area. Because the weather often precluded visual strikes, LORAN-equipped F-4 aircraft were used to lead F-4 fighter-bombers.<sup>75/</sup>

At this time in Quang Tri Province, FAC responsibilities were divided into three areas: (1) the F-4 FACs operated deep into enemy territory; (2) USAF O-2 and OV-10 aircraft ranged forward of the battle front for close interdiction; and (3) the VNAF O-1s covered the front line of battle to provide close air support for the ARVN. Unfortunately, the VNAF FACs did not fulfill their commitment. As evaluated by Major Brookbank, who was responsible for FAC coverage in the AO, the VNAF FACs "either . . . failed to go to their assigned areas or they would not make contact with the ARVN ground commander." The VNAF TACP only reported VNAF FAC positions as fragged while in actuality the FACs were orbiting well inside friendly lines and not making contact. It was finally conceded by U.S. advisors that USAF FACs would have to be moved in to assume coverage closer to the

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forward edge of battle area (FEBA). This permitted VNAF FACs to operate inside friendly lines, thus avoiding ground fire. However, the VNAF FACs still refused to cover the FEBA and remained well to the rear, flying at an estimated altitude of 6000-7000 feet.

Consequently, USAF FACs had to assume responsibilities for complete visual reconnaissance and close air support.<sup>76/</sup> As noted in one field comment:<sup>77/</sup>

The Air Force FACs were highly professional and eager to help us folks on the ground. During one three day period on about 20 April when the enemy was putting about 400 rounds of artillery and hitting other positions with direct fire weapons and anti-aircraft guns, I had available through the FACs nearly unlimited close air support. We ran approximately seventy sorties against enemy positions which destroyed at least one 130mm gun with two probables, one large fuel dump, several AAA guns and positions, four 82mm mortars, and several bunker complexes. In addition, six secondary explosions were seen and heard. Some of this air support was at night under flares and extremely effective. The FACs stayed on station around the clock.

In contrast to the VNAF FAC support, VNAF A-1 TACAIR sorties performed in an exceptional manner during this time. The VNAF A-1s would contact the ground commander when necessary, worked without the VNAF FACs, and obtained outstanding results. Often, when the weather prevented other fighter aircraft strikes, the VNAF A-1 close air support was "a most critical and valuable asset."<sup>78/</sup>

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In spite of the ARVN mid-April counteroffensive and the incessant TACAIR and B-52 strikes, the NVA continued to assemble forces and make preparations for heavy attacks on the cities of Dong Ha and Quang Tri. Likewise, the enemy main force elements of the NVA 324B Infantry Division continued to apply pressure against FSBs and main road nets near Hue. <sup>79/</sup>

Although enemy activity in other areas of MR I was light compared to the pressure in Quang Tri Province, it tied down RVNAF forces which could otherwise have been used to strengthen the defenses at Quang Tri. On 25 April, intelligence sources suggested that an all-out NVA attack would take place against Hue following the anticipated capture of Quang Tri. Consequently, it appeared that the RVNAF positions around Quang Tri City were in imminent danger. <sup>80/</sup>

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## CHAPTER V

### FALL OF QUANG TRI CITY: 27 APRIL-1 MAY

The predicted NVA push against the Dong Ha-Quang Tri area began with increased indirect artillery and mortar fire followed by tank-supported ground attacks on 27 April. The NVA had completed preliminary maneuvers that enabled them to attack from all directions. As in the opening phase of the offensive, the weather was generally unfavorable for air operations: fifty-foot ceilings severely restricted air support. Even so, General Lam declared a "tactical emergency" and requested additional TACAIR and Arc Light support.<sup>81/</sup> Major Jim Joy, USMC, Senior Advisor to the VNMC 147th Brigade, described the opening attacks:<sup>82/</sup>\*

At 0630 in the morning of the 27th, ground attacks commenced in the 147th Brigade area of operation against the 1st Battalion and throughout the 1st Armored Brigade AO to the north (Dong Ha). The ground attacks were supported by intense 130mm artillery fire. The 1st Battalion took some 500 rounds of 82mm fire in the first two hours of the contact and beat off two ground attacks. Late on the afternoon of the 27th, the 1st and 8th Battalions were attacked by a tank infantry force from the west and southwest. Early discovery of the assault enabled organic artillery and direct support tanks to halt the attack. On the evening of the 27th, the 1st and 8th were pulled in close to the Ai Tu perimeter. Shortly before dark, most of the ammunition in the Ai Tu ammunition dump was destroyed by 130mm fire. On the morning of the 28th, 130mm artillery continued to pound the Ai Tu Combat Base.

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\*At 0800 on 23 April, three battalions of the 147th Brigade relieved Brigade 258 in the Ai Tu Combat Base area: the 4th Infantry Battalion had responsibility for Ai Tu perimeter security; the 1st Battalion was deployed to the southwest approximately 2-3 km; the 8th Battalion deployed to the northwest approximately 1 km.

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Rapid development of the attack generated many requests for air support and the necessity to coordinate the TACAIR with artillery fire. RVNAF elements sent their TACAIR requests to the 3d Division TOC. The TOC passed the requests to the U.S. TACP, which ensured proper coordination with I-DASC and FAC coverage. In order to effectively control the large numbers of air sorties allocated to Quang Tri, USAF FACs were assigned specific areas for interdiction or close air support as required. <sup>83/</sup>

Because of the heavy combat activity, numerous conflicts resulted between gunfire and fighter patterns. It was difficult to get the ARVN artillery to stop fire to permit air strikes, and when the resumption of artillery fire was authorized, another air strike was often due. Also, the constant redeployment of batteries made accurate registration of artillery impossible. <sup>84/</sup>

The battle situation deteriorated on 28 April as friendly forces, including elements from Dong Ha, withdrew to within 5 km of the Quang Tri Citadel in defensive actions. By 1550 on the 28th, friendly units had retreated even further, to the northern edge of Quang Tri Combat Base, two and one-half miles northwest of Quang Tri. In heavy fire support actions, friendly artillery, tanks, and U.S. Army Cobra helicopter gunships destroyed 17 enemy tanks. As usual, enemy ground forces were supported by tanks, heavy artillery, and mortar fire. <sup>85/</sup>

The problem of controlling up to 200 close air support sorties per day around the clock continued to pose a challenge to the tactical air control

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system. In order to prevent chaos, it was imperative that FAC coverage be maintained in the immediate battle area to direct air against tank attacks and in troops in contact (TIC) situations. Often, when the U.S. TACP responded to urgent calls by diverting a FAC and one or two sets of TACAIR, it was discovered that the ground commander only suspected tanks and desired a FAC to check the location. USAF FACs were dispersed throughout the entire area and generally did not have sufficient time to conduct visual reconnaissance before responding to divert calls.<sup>86/</sup> The alertness of the FACs, however, was frequently demonstrated. For example:<sup>87/</sup>

On 28 April, the ARVN TOC commander gave clearance to a USAF FAC to direct strikes against tanks without ARVN marker panels located south of QTCB. The FAC was hesitant since the tanks were in the open and not actively hostile. The tanks were eventually identified as friendly. At other times, forward elements of an ARVN unit would report tanks and enemy advancing which FACs later confirmed as old destroyed hulks.

Enemy troops began their final advance on Quang Tri City at 0230 on 29 April. Frontal attacks commenced at 0315, and the situation became critical. ARVN forces, supported by VNAF and U.S. TACAIR, repeatedly repelled assaults while inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy. One report described the attacks:<sup>88/</sup>

The enemy launched a tank and infantry attack on the north end of the bridge heading into Quang Tri City. The attack originated from the west and quickly pushed back the defending ARVN 2d Regiment elements. The 18th Armored Cavalry fought well and held the enemy on the north side of the bridge as all RVNAF units

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retreated. Then, in a timely and devastating TACAIR operation, a FAC using flare light directed strike after strike on the enemy. The attack was beaten off and resulted in five enemy destroyed tanks.

In an effort to counter the aggressiveness of air strikes, the NVA introduced a new air defense weapon in MR I. On 29 April, the NVA fired a Soviet STRELA (SA-7) missile at an F-4 aircraft north of Quang Tri City. Operated by ground troops against any low level flight operations at low or moderate speed, the SA-7 posed a serious threat to FACs and to helicopters flying SAR missions in MR I.<sup>89/</sup> It was necessary for aircraft to develop evasive maneuvers, including the use of flares to decoy the missile once launch was detected. The usual countermeasure employed was an evasive maneuver involving a hard turn or a turn into the exhaust flight path such that the aircraft would cover its own IR signature.<sup>90/</sup>

Peculiar to MR I was another danger to the slow-moving FACs. The ARVN often failed to fire illumination rounds at the altitude requested by U.S. advisors and FACs. Instead of 3000 feet, the ARVN artillery fired flares at 6000 feet, 2000 feet above the FAC's altitude. The result: intense 23, 37, and 57mm AAA fire directed at the FAC aircraft as it appeared in silhouette against the brilliant flares.<sup>91/</sup>

On the morning of 29 April, with the battle line two to three km outside the city, Brigadier General Thomas W. Bowen, USA, Deputy Senior Advisor to MR I, estimated that Quang Tri was threatened by the equivalent of four NVN divisions, about 40,000 men, who outnumbered government forces three

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to one.<sup>92/</sup> Two known enemy regiments, with about 30 tanks, were deployed northwest of the city; two regiments with 20 tanks were to the southwest; and one or two regiments, with an unknown number of tanks, were located to the southeast.<sup>93/</sup> By nightfall, the situation was bleak, and General Giai, ARVN 3d Division Commander, issued evacuation orders at 2125 hours. However, General Lam, Corps Commander, rescinded the order at 2300 hours the same day.<sup>94/</sup>

As the combat activity surged towards Quang Tri City, refugee foot and vehicular traffic congested the highways leading to Hue. The first and largest group of refugees assembled in Quang Tri City early on 29 April and then moved approximately six miles south on Route 1, to the vicinity of Hai Lang District Town. (See Figure 2.) At this point, the convoy came under attack by NVA direct and indirect fire. Lead vehicles were stopped immediately, and mass confusion ensued.<sup>95/</sup> Although three quarters of the people in the convoy were civilians, 95 percent of the vehicles in the column were military; the majority were two and one-half ton trucks plus a considerable number of flatbeds, tankers, small trucks, jeeps, and 15 ambulances. There were also a few ARVN tanks and armored personnel carriers. Hundreds of motorcycles and bicycles contributed to making the road impassable once the firing began. More than 500 four-wheeled vehicles were destroyed during the debacle. MR I Red Cross officials placed the death toll at 2000, including women, children, and elderly and sick evacuees from Quang Tri hospitals.<sup>96/</sup>

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The convoy tragedy was reflective of the disintegration of command and control occurring in Quang Tri City. The ARVN 3d Division was rapidly losing control of the situation as evidenced by their failure to organize flank security for the refugee column. The enemy took full advantage of the situation and inflicted a defeat whose psychological effect was instrumental in triggering mass retreat among the remaining 3d Division units and also led to an exodus of civilians out of Hue in the days to follow.

On 30 April, amid sustained enemy bombardment and ground attacks, VNMC elements began the evacuation of QTCB, located across the river from Quang Tri City. Unfortunately, ARVN engineers, in a moment of panic, destroyed the Quang Tri Bridge before the Marines had completed their withdrawal. As a result, TACAIR had to be called in to complete the destruction of abandoned friendly artillery pieces and tanks. Additional air strikes and NGF were used in the destruction of POL dumps and ammo storage areas.<sup>97/</sup> During the night of 30 April, the situation worsened. By 2300 hours, the RVNAF abandoned all territory north of Quang Tri City. During the day, over 4500 rounds of artillery and rocket fire fell on the city.<sup>98/</sup>

By the morning of 1 May, the Marines still held the west side of the city with the Ranger and 20th Tank elements to the south. All other ARVN resistance north, east, and west of the Citadel had disappeared. U.S. advisors continued to coordinate TACAIR and NGF, but, unfortunately, adverse weather conditions prevented effective air support, and, consequently, enemy armor assaults continued.<sup>99/</sup>

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Refugee Convoy

FIGURE 6

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By 1200, Gen Giai considered the situation hopeless. Attempts to break out of the Citadel to join Marine and Ranger units 1200 meters to the south were unsuccessful. After receiving information that 10,000 additional rounds of enemy artillery fire were forecast, General Gaia issued evacuation orders for a second time. The ARVN evacuation plan called for the 1st Armored Brigade, 1st, 4th, and 5th Ranger Groups, and 57th ARVN Regiment to attempt to push south on Route 1. Brigade 147 (VNMC) was directed to escort the 3d ARVN Division Headquarters south to link up with Brigade 369 (VNMC) north of the My Chanh River. The remaining tanks and armored personnel carriers would move in the center of the column with the Division Staff. <sup>100/</sup>

The emergency evacuation of U.S. and ARVN personnel from the Quang Tri Citadel, already a hazardous operation, was complicated by a rapid disintegration of the ARVN command and control structure. This collapse resulted in the total loss of communication among the remaining RVNAF combat units and placed the lives of American advisors within the Citadel in jeopardy. Completely cut off, U.S. advisors and ARVN Headquarters personnel <sup>101/</sup> remained in the Citadel.

Seventh Air Force agencies Blue Chip, the Joint Rescue and Coordination Center (JRCC), and I-DASC coordinated a SAR evacuation plan for the besieged defenders in the Citadel. The original pickup zone selected by I-DASC was an open field 1000 yards from the Citadel, but enemy pressure required the pickup point to be altered to the more secure Citadel heli-port.

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During this time, three FACs were assigned to cover the Citadel area with other FACs providing coverage for RVNAF units retreating south. <sup>102/</sup> At 1400, 7AF JRCC ordered the rescue components at Da Nang to execute the Quang Tri evacuation plan. The 37th ARRS initiated the plan at 1500, and all forces were in the area by 1525 in a "feet wet" orbit east of Quang Tri. The weather at launch, enroute, and in the objective area was clear with a visibility of 15 miles. <sup>103/</sup> Major Brookbank, 3d Division ALO, coordinated the fire support and rescue team efforts from his position within the walls of the Citadel. Major Brookbank said that: <sup>104/</sup>

each FAC was given four sets of TACAIR to commence air support at 1530 with the "Jolly Greens" due in at 1535. The power station was blown at 1520 by the NVA and control of TACAIR was turned over to Ramrod (ABCCC), by land line to I-DASC. Army advisors proceeded to burn classified materials and destroy all equipment with high explosives. Four squads had been formed in case the evacuation failed and a breakout had to be made. The air cover commenced at 1530 as F-4s delivered every type of ordnance. The tactical situation dictated that normal safe distances be waived. So, we could do nothing but watch, wait, and thank God for the U.S. Air Force.

Despite the fast mover F-4 strikes, some enemy artillery continued to hit the Citadel. One 105mm shell impacted five feet beneath an American guarding the south wall. (Because the soft dirt absorbed the full impact, there were no casualties.) Finally, at 1630, after a sustained barrage of TACAIR strikes, the FAC called for the rescue forces. The Jolly Greens were coming in. A-1 Sandy aircraft from Da Nang AB led the Jolly Greens to the Citadel in five-minute intervals.

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Quang Tri City

FIGURE 7

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As the Jolly Greens made their dangerous, low-level approach, landed, and completed the evacuation, the Sandys flew clover leaf fire suppression patterns, and the two Hobo (A-1) aircraft from Nakhon Phanom RTAFB placed down an effective smoke screen. Jolly Green 71 landed on the small pad inside the Citadel surrounded by a burning bunker to the north, a 12-foot wall to the south, and buildings to the east and west. The aircraft received no ground fire, but, while on final approach, the tail gunner fired at some NVA outside the Citadel who were observed to be aiming small arms weapons. Jolly Green 71 departed the pickup area at 1652 after two minutes on the ground, and landed at Da Nang AB at 1745 with 37 survivors. 105/

The second rescue aircraft, Jolly Green 65, entered the area escorted by Sandy 11. About one mile out, the pilot started an auto-rotative descent from 4000 feet and landed on a northeasterly heading. The pilot gave the following report: 106/

Most of the buildings were on fire causing heavy black smoke to blow northeast shielding us from the heaviest concentration of enemy troops. The survivors boarded through the aft ramp and after two to three minutes, we took off with forty-seven passengers.

Although a ground advisor had identified a need for four rescue helicopters, Jolly Green 21, the third aircraft to ingress, successfully evacuated the remaining 45 survivors. A fourth Jolly Green landed, but took off in 30 seconds when the pilot discovered everyone had been evacuated.

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The SAR evacuation of 132 personnel from the Citadel reflected a tremendous USAF team performance. The rescue forces achieved their goal while braving perilous conditions and without suffering a single casualty or aircraft loss. Only the professionalism of the TACAIR (A-1 and F-4), FAC, and rescue crewmembers enabled this outstanding accomplishment. 107/

After the collapse of the Citadel defense, evacuating elements of the RVNAF moved south for the next two days. During this time, USAF FACs were constantly aloft, maintaining communication contact, providing RECCE for the retreating columns, and directing TACAIR strikes against pursuing NVA forces. Seventh Air Force placed emphasis on the destruction of vehicular traffic between the DMZ and Dong Ha, and the protection of the retreating elements. One retreating element, the 5th Ranger Group, made contact with a USAF FAC at 1400 on 1 May. The Ranger advisor gave an account which relates the hazardous nature of the mission of the USAF FAC: 108/

The FAC spotted targets and directed airstrikes from 1600 hours until he was shot down at approximately 1800 hours, parachuting into the leading elements of 5th Ranger Group. His replacement FAC continued to direct airstrikes and extraction of the downed FAC was planned but was abandoned when a Skyraider flying cover was hit and forced to head for the coast. Air support was diverted to support the damaged aircraft.

This Ranger unit was cut off by enemy forces and was forced behind enemy lines. Attacked from several directions while within the enemy's defensive positions, the 5th Ranger Group scattered into fairly small elements. The following day the downed FAC arranged a helicopter extraction for the three Ranger advisors and himself. 109/

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In another supporting action, a USAF FAC spotted tanks approaching the 147th VNMC Brigade south of Hai Lang. The FAC called in TACAIR to engage the enemy tanks and infantry and called in an Army helicopter to evacuate the U.S. advisors. <sup>110/</sup>

Eventually, all RVNAF elements retreated from Quang Tri Province. On 3 May, the VNMC 369th Brigade completed the withdrawal by evacuating FSB Nancy and crossing to the south side of the Thac Ma River. <sup>111/</sup> The *Stars and Stripes* published poignant stories about "the lone, lonesome road out of Quang Tri": <sup>112/</sup>

Retreat. They came out of Quang Tri City in thousands, long weary columns of men on foot, in tanks and commandeered civilian vehicles. Quang Tri had fallen and so had the Province. Men wept to see the battered remnants of once proud units--the elite Rangers, South Vietnamese Marines, tankers, and the mauled 3d Infantry Division.

"We were beaten at Fuller, we were beaten at Dong Ha and we have been beaten at Quang Tri," said one Vietnamese soldier. "I am finished. I have had enough." Another said, "It was hell in Quang Tri. The shells were landing all around us. We started running to get away. It was horrible. We were so scared. We just ran and ran . . . we didn't see any Communist soldiers. It was just the shells."

During this final phase of the battle for Quang Tri Province, the NVA had directed coordinated attacks from all directions on Quang Tri City. The intense NVA artillery and tank attacks created havoc by splitting some RVNAF forces and inducing panic in others. U.S. TACAIR and naval gunfire were vital defensive assets as the ARVN artillery

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gradually lost all effectiveness. However, some RVNAF forces held while others broke and ran. As noted by one observer: <sup>113/</sup>

The RVN Marines never lost fighting effectiveness and had to be ordered to withdraw many times to plug gaps in the front. In the end, the VNMC 147th and 258th Brigades; and the 20th Tank Squadron, because they never stopped fighting and remained effective, enabled the U.S. advisors in the Citadel to evacuate. Those units (VNMC and 20th Tank) with their advisors fought their way out toward Hue.

Thus, the NVA had achieved the initial objective of their invasion of MR I, the capture of Quang Tri City. Within a span of 33 days, the entire province had fallen to the NVA forces. Many officials were quick to point out, however, that the NVA did not "win" Quang Tri Province--the South Vietnamese "lost" it. In this vein, Paul A. Daly, Province Senior Advisor, commented: <sup>114/</sup>

Psychologically the NVA scored heavily with the introduction of 130mm artillery and tanks. In justifying their collapse, a number of South Vietnamese used this for an excuse--without considering that they had more artillery and better tanks, not to mention TACAIR, B-52 strikes, and naval gunfire. Rumors, refugees, and retreating troops heading south did the rest. There was a definite requirement for a strong psychological warfare campaign to let the troops know what was going on, buck up their morale, and remind them of what they were fighting for.

Lt Colonel Hoat, Commander of the VNAF for Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces, shared Daly's viewpoint of the demoralizing effect of the heavy artillery. Hoat added that the morale of senior military and civilian

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leaders in Quang Tri Province was also undermined by rumors that the United States had permitted the enemy attack to occur as a test of Vietnamization. He further identified several specific problem areas: (1) the RVNAF made no effort to pin the enemy down to enhance the effectiveness of air strikes; (2) there was a lack of coordination among RVN ground, artillery, and air forces; and (3) the lack of an operational plan adequate to cope with the situation was a serious shortcoming. 115/

Additional factors which contributed to the fall of Quang Tri Province as cited by USAF and USMC advisors included: 116/

- *no leasans* !
- Adverse weather conditions during the first critical days of the NVA offensive and during occasional later periods limited air application and effectiveness.
- The inability of Allied forces to neutralize enemy armor and heavy artillery quickly in the intense AAA and SAM environment.
- The extended SAR no-fire zones which hampered ARVN efforts to counter NVA movements and fire power.
- ARVN utilization of available air resources was hesitant and inexperienced despite advisory assistance.
- Targeting changes and modifications of 3d Division's requests were made by higher commander levels without coordination.
- Execution of area denial mission requests was delayed and ineffective.
- ARVN artillery support was extremely poor, both in volume and timeliness.

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- Lack of active patrolling precluded the compilation of intelligence information about the enemy's disposition, strength, and intentions.
- The breakdown in unity of command in several instances resulted in the failure of units to remain responsive to the area commander.

The inexperienced ARVN 3d Division suffered the brunt of criticism. The command and control of the division was reportedly remiss in the coordination of ground, artillery, and air resources. Based on numerous after-action reports, the charge appears well-founded.<sup>117/</sup> The collapse of General Giai's 3d Division command post played a major role in the disintegration of the defensive posture at Quang Tri City. In an emotional letter, General Giai accepted "full responsibility" for the retreat:<sup>118/</sup>

I bear full responsibility . . . [to the judgment of] history and the law for this withdrawal. The capital of Quang Tri Province is in ruins. Our food, our ammunition, all our fuel supplies are gone. Our force is exhausted. I see no further reason why we should stay on in this ruined situation. I ordered you to withdraw in order to fortify our units again from a new front to annihilate remaining Communist forces if they still engage in this wrongful war.

The loss of Quang Tri had an immediate impact in the Saigon Palace. President Thieu was under no illusions concerning the military, political, and psychological importance of the defeat. He was also skeptical of the prospects to organize an effective defense line short of Hue.<sup>119/</sup>

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## CHAPTER VI

### THE DEFENSE OF HUE

After the capture of Quang Tri, the NVA consolidated its gains and repositioned its forces for an attack on Hue. The enemy goal was to seize this key city and, in the process, to annihilate as many RVNAF main forces and reserves as possible. <sup>120/</sup>

With Quang Tri secure, the NVA continued heavy indirect artillery fire and ground attacks (supported by armor) against friendly positions in the eastern Quang Tri/Thua Thien border area and on the western approaches to Hue. To support their operations, the enemy expanded their logistics system in MR I and deployed additional units from NVN. The NVA also sought to take advantage of the widely-dispersed ARVN forces by stepping up guerrilla attacks, terrorism, and propaganda and proselyting activities in Quang Nam, Quang Tin, and Quang Ngai Provinces. Further, captured NVA communication logbooks revealed that the enemy monitored RVNAF and U.S. radio communications, enabling the NVA to use their forces in MR I more efficiently and to avoid contact with ARVN search operations. The NVA artillery advantage was strengthened by their use of captured PRC 25 radio sets to confirm and adjust artillery fire. After their first artillery round impacted, the enemy temporarily ceased firing and used the radio to monitor RVNAF or U.S. conversations. Based upon information gained by such monitoring, the enemy then adjusted their aim and continued shelling the targets with improved accuracy. <sup>121/</sup>

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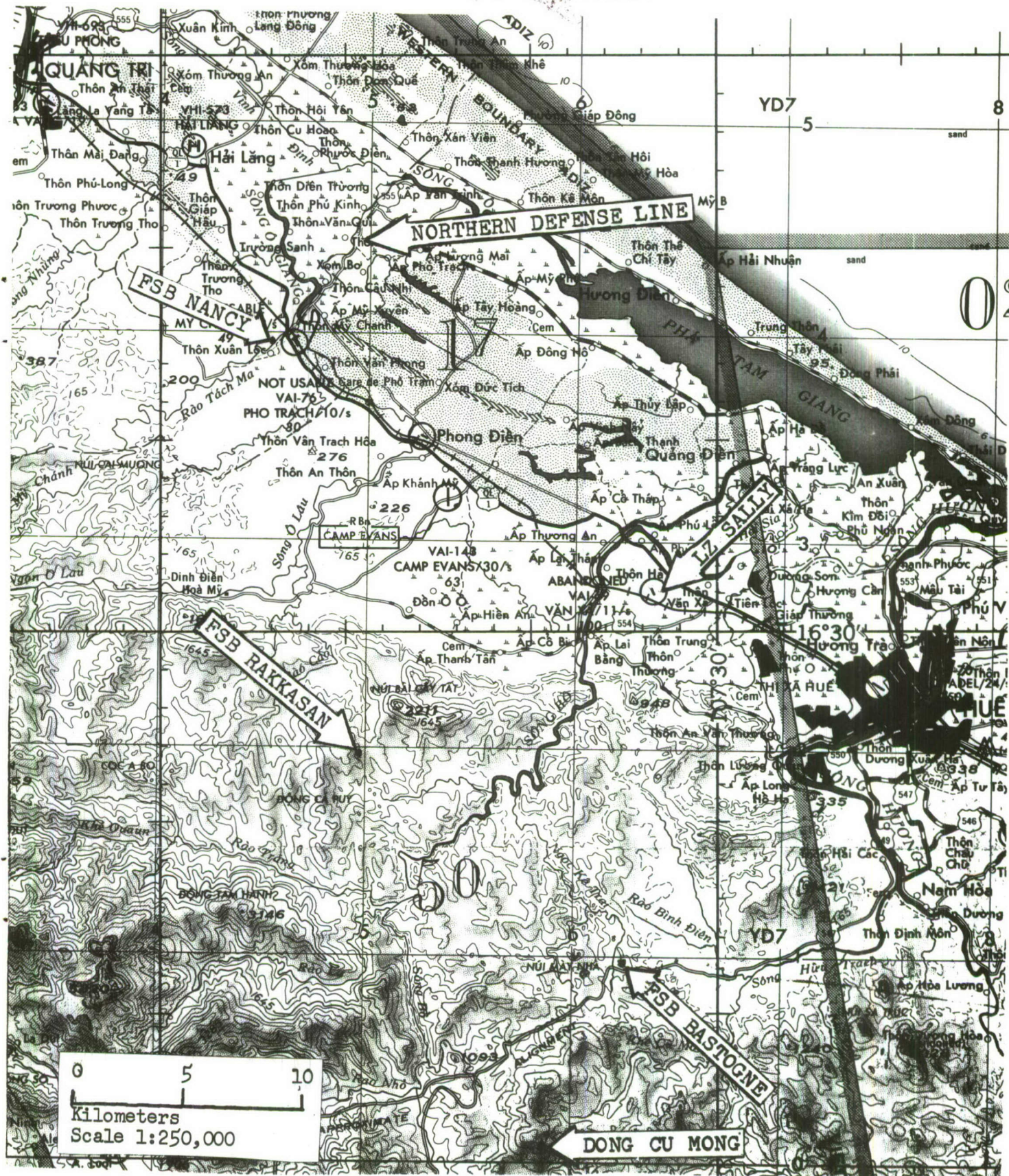
With the NVA rapidly repositioning troops and equipment for an advance on Hue, President Thieu acted promptly to restore confidence and prepare for battle. On 3 May, he ordered Lt Gen Ngo Quang Truong, MR IV Commander, to take command in MR I. This was a psychological as well as a tactical move. In addition to his acknowledged military competence, Truong also brought to MR I his reputation as the commander of the ARVN division that had functioned successfully at Hue during the enemy Tet offensive in 1968. Then, in a strategic move to bolster the RVNAF units defending the approaches to Hue, he directed the airlift of two brigades of the elite Airborne Division to Thua Thien Province. Finally, President Thieu emphasized his concern for the defense of Hue by making a personal visit to Phu Bai and Hue on 4 May. This trip raised his prestige and gave new hope to the defenders of MR I. <sup>122/</sup>

A herculean task confronted Gen Truong when he assumed command of MR I. The remnants of the ARVN 3d Division were in disorganized retreat; the VNMC was making a valiant effort to establish a line of defense against the NVA along the northern Thua Thien border and the My Chanh River; and the 1st ARVN Division was struggling to maintain defensive positions to the west and southwest of Hue. The conditions dictated firm leadership to regenerate a fighting spirit among the military forces and to restore confidence in the command structure. General Truong's first action in early May was to reorganize the defense. He formed a northern defensive line along the Quang Tri-Thua Thien border and My Chanh River from the coast inland beyond Route 1. The 369th and 258th VNMC Brigades, supplemented by RF/PF forces,

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Defense Area--Hue

FIGURE 8

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occupied the critical northern positions. Truong gave the VNMC's 147th Brigade responsibility for the Hue Citadel defense, placing two battalions on the walls and one in a reserve posture. The ARVN 1st Division assumed the responsibility for the remaining approaches, starting on the northern flank at Camp Evans and swinging southward to FSB Birmingham and Camp Eagle. Finally, to better coordinate the defenses of Hue, General Truong moved the I Corps Headquarters to Hue. <sup>123/</sup>

After General Truong established his Headquarters at Hue, he wanted the coordinating and controlling arm of the MR I air effort collocated at the Citadel. When he requested 7th Air Force to move the I-DASC from Da Nang Air Base to Hue, the initial response was negative because of the complex support problems involved. Truong still insisted, however, and in a later interview, General Vogt recalled the action taken on the problem: <sup>124/</sup>

I went up to Hue to discuss the I-DASC situation. He [Truong] felt so strongly, as did I after talking to him, about the necessity of having fire support control at Hue that we [7AF] made super-human efforts to move the DASC.

Consequently, 7AF shifted the I-DASC to Hue, although a skeleton crew remained at the "rear" DASC in Da Nang to provide a backup capability and assistance in the areas of communication, administration, and supply. <sup>125/</sup> Further coordination was effected through a Fire Support Coordination Center composed of the naval gunfire support teams and the ARVN Corps artillery (TOC) which was collocated with I-DASC. <sup>126/</sup>

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To attain efficient and effective control of tactical air, specific areas were assigned for tactical use by ARVN artillery, US tactical air and VNAF tactical air. These tactical areas could be changed within minutes as the tactical or weather situations required by simple coordination procedures developed by the FSCC and the DASC. The two coordination centers worked in complete harmony with excellent results obtained between both air and ground force operations.

While General Truong was concentrating on command and control functions in Hue, the NVA began to assemble their forces for an attack on the city. In order to have any chance of success, the NVA had to move armor and artillery pieces within striking range of Hue and to establish supply lines between North Vietnam and NVA field forces. These NVA requirements dictated Truong's priorities for air and naval fire support: the 130mm gun, tanks, lesser artillery pieces, and trucks, with only TIC situations to receive higher precedence.<sup>127/</sup>

Airpower responded to support General Truong's command against the NVA threat with outstanding efficiency. In the most intensive in-country interdiction campaign of the war, 7AF organized and employed its air resources to choke off the enemy's resupply effort. At the same time, FACs and gunships waged a search and destroy operation against the NVA's heavy artillery. TACAIR close air support and B-52 strikes continually frustrated the enemy's ground attacks by inflicting heavy casualties on troop concentrations.<sup>128/</sup>

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Nonetheless, acting in bold defiance of the omnipresent U.S. fire support, the NVA sought to exploit the advantage that had been achieved during the first month of the invasion. The NVA committed the fresh 324B Division along Route 547 from the west in order to tie down the 1st ARVN Division, and there was no effective force between the enemy to the north and Hue except TACAIR and the battle worn Marines. During the first week of May, the weather broke, and TACAIR began a classic interdiction campaign, cutting roads and using guided bombs to destroy the bridges north of Hue. One group of over 100 trucks were isolated between the destroyed bridges, and, overall, hundreds of trucks were destroyed. Two giant cranes, which were being moved in to restore the bridges, were also destroyed by F-4s delivering the highly effective laser guided bombs (LGBs).<sup>129/</sup>

Time and again, TACAIR struck massed armor moving toward Hue. Preliminary destruction of SAM sites during late April and early May in the DMZ greatly aided this effort.<sup>130/</sup> On 2 May, USAF F-4 sorties attacked and halted tanks along the route structure between the DMZ and Dong Ha and also south of Quang Tri City on Highway I.<sup>131/</sup> On one occasion, when a FAC spotted a column of tanks heading for the My Chanh Bridge, ARVN artillery and TACAIR responded and destroyed 10 tanks.<sup>132/</sup> Frustrated by TACAIR along the highway, the NVA attempted to skirt defensive positions by moving PT-76 tanks along the beach. Diverted F-4s streaked to the beach, destroying 11 and damaging the other 12 tanks.<sup>133/</sup>

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From 2300 hours on 8 May until 0600 on 9 May, allied forces laid a coordinated barrage of TACAIR, ground artillery, and NGF along a 25 km front extending from the coast along the My Chanh River. The target was an enemy build-up, followed the enemy movements, and directed an additional barrage between 1000 and 1500 hours on 9 May. As a result, a possible major NVA assault was prevented. <sup>134/</sup>

Since the start of the NVA offensive, one of the biggest problems had been the location and destruction of enemy artillery pieces, especially the 130mm guns, because of their mobility and firing range. Normally towed by a cab-type tracked vehicle with a 300 HP diesel engine, 130mm guns could be moved almost anywhere: over mountain trails, through the A Shau Valley, and across the broken terraint of the highlands. With deadly accuracy and a range potential of 19 miles, it could outgun all ARVN artillery. Although the ARVN's 175mm gun had a longer range (20 miles), it was not as effective. The 130mm had a higher rate of fire (6-7 rounds per minute) and extremely accurate proximity-fused shells. <sup>135/</sup>

Since the ARVN artillery was ineffective in counter-battery fire, General Truong asked what 7th Air Force could do to silence the 130mm to prevent its use in the assault on Hue. <sup>136/</sup> Seventh Air Force responded with a major tactical effort aimed at detecting and destroying the 130mm guns. This effort, which encompassed the Hue/Quang Tri areas, began on 5 May and continued for the remainder of the month. While Spectres were used in this effort, it was the FACs who were most effective in locating

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On 14 May, regiments of the 1st ARVN Division, and elements of the Airborne Division and Ranger Command, launched a major search operation in the areas west and southwest of Hue. The operation, nicknamed Lam Son 72, became an extended campaign against the NVA forces.<sup>141/</sup> The standard plan of attack called for Arc Light missions to strike a suspected NVA area, with RVNAF units moving in to assess BDA and eliminate any resistance. FACs flew overhead to direct artillery fire and call in TACAIR as required. USAF gunships supported night encounters by providing direct fire and flares, and also suppressed enemy artillery fire, often merely by being in the area. One specific ARVN attack, following B-52 strikes, located the forward headquarters of the NVA 29th Regiment. The running engagement with the 29th also led to the retaking of FSB Bastogne on 15 May. By the end of a week's continuous fighting, the NVA 29th Regiment was forced out of combat as a result of the heavy casualties which it suffered.<sup>142/</sup>

While these limited campaigns were in progress, the USAF was attempting to assist the ARVN by finding a way to locate and destroy the 130mm guns with greater effectiveness than was possible using FACs and Spectres. On 19 May, 7th Air Force proposed the Acoustic Gun Location System (ACUGUN). This system, based on the Rome Air Development Center's Cross Correlation for Target Location System (CORLOC), was installed at Task Force Alpha (TFA) to locate heavy artillery firing, principally, in the Hue area. The ACUGUN contained many of the elements of the CORLOC system (specifically, simultaneous audio signals from three sensors, time of arrival differences, and intersection of hyperbolae determined by the time of arrival differences).

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gun positions. This was done by having the same FAC continually fly the same area. Still, the overall effectiveness of the search for 130mm guns was limited by the enemy's refusal to fire when a FAC or Spectre was in the area. <sup>137/</sup>

Airlifted to the battle area, two Airborne units (the 2d Brigade on 8 May and the 3d Brigade on 24 May) strengthened the RVNAF ground capability and set the stage for counterattack operations by the three major RVNAF fighting commands: VNMC, Airborne, and 1st ARVN. <sup>138/</sup>

In addition to interdiction and destruction of enemy artillery, close air support was vital in a series of VNMC limited-objective operations. The first of these, Operation Mellwood, was conducted on 13 May when U.S. Marine helicopters airlifted three battalions of the 369th Brigade into enemy-occupied Hai Lang District in southern Quang Tri Province. The objectives of the operation were to throw enemy troops off balance (disrupt offensive plans) and to boost the morale of RVNAF units. <sup>139/</sup> The fire support plan called for extensive landing zone preparation by Arc Light, ARVN artillery, NGF, and TACAIR. Eighteen TACAIR sorties struck the area initially, and an additional 22 sorties provided close air support during the engagement. While inflicting numerous enemy casualties, TACAIR destroyed three PT-76 tanks and two 130mm artillery pieces. The one-day action was executed swiftly and with precision. Colonel James Dorsey, USMC, Senior Marine Advisor, called the operation a success and praised the performance of air power. <sup>140/</sup>

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The major distinction was the ACUGUN's target, now heavy artillery instead of SAM site generators. <sup>143/</sup> An audio sensor field was initiated on 9 June using Hue as a center point for 42, 47, 52, and 57 km arcs. On 11 June, 7th Air Force directed the addition of a 62 km arc and additional sensor strings on the 42 and 47 km arcs. As of 21 June, 149 sensors for the ACUGUN Project were in operation. <sup>144/</sup>

The results of the ACUGUN system for the period 11 to 30 June were, in summary: a "boom" was heard 711 times; of the 711 computer developed strip-charts, only 140 had targets; from the 140, 176 targets were developed, and, of these, 34 were struck; only two strikes produced damage assessments, but no 130mm guns were destroyed. <sup>145/</sup>

General Vogt commented on the ineffectiveness of the ACUGUN system: <sup>146/</sup>

The system had many problems. If you tried to use it (ACUGUN) close to ARVN artillery positions, it could not distinguish between the two. We finally decided to employ the system only in areas beyond the range of friendly weapons. However, it was never accurate enough to locate with any precision the 130mm guns. What it did do was to provide an indication of the location and frequency of enemy artillery fire. FACs were trained to search for the guns in specific areas. During the current offensive, FAC directed TACAIR strikes have destroyed over 172 of the 130mm guns and damaged 72.

On 20 May at 0855 hours, the NVA launched a major armor thrust along the My Chanh River. On the east end, tanks crossed the river and headed south against VNMC and PF positions at Huong Dien Village on the coast.

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In the center, northeast of FSB Nancy, the enemy forded the My Chanh River and pushed the VNMC back 1 km. To the west end, tanks and infantry crossed south of the Thac Ma River. I Corps notified Blue Chip, and TACAIR was sent to the scene.<sup>147/</sup> In all instances, TACAIR struck the enemy positions, inflicting heavy casualties and destroying, damaging, or driving off the enemy tanks. Enemy losses along the Thac Ma front were reported to be 300 KBA and 18 tanks destroyed by TACAIR.<sup>148/</sup> The battle see-sawed for several days but eventually the combat activity decreased and the VNMC restored the defensive line. The northern defense, with the valuable fire support of TACAIR, NGF, and ground artillery, had survived its first crucial test.

On 24 May, the VNMC launched another limited-objective action: Operation Song Thanh 6/72. This amphibious and helicopter airborne assault in the vicinity of Hai Lang District (Quang Tri Province) was conducted by three battalions of the 147th Regiment and was designed to seize and destroy enemy forces, equipment, and supplies; to disrupt enemy lines of communications; and to execute a tactical withdrawal toward friendly forces south of the My Chanh River. As before, the Fire Support Plan called for Landing Zone (LZ) preparation by Arc Light, artillery, NGF, and TACAIR.<sup>149/</sup>

The VNMC working plan (see Figure 9) indicated the importance of USAF air support in the operation:<sup>150/</sup>

USAF will provide Arc Lights for beach and helicopter LZ preparation and to neutralize other targets. TACAIR assets will also be provided for LZ preps and CAP





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immediately prior to and following the Beach and helicopter landing. In addition, smoke will be laid on two separate lines to screen the amphibious and helicopter landings. TACAIR support will be provided throughout the remainder of the operation. Three FAC aircraft will be provided during the operation. One FAC will cover the operation area; one FAC will cover the western flank and one FAC with Naval Gunfire Spotter will cover the northern flank. A closed air zone will be placed around the operation area so that all fixed wing assets will be controlled by FACs. Two dump boxes will be provided for live ordnance drop in the event TACAIR is not able to expend in support of the operation. [LGBs] . . . will be requested for artillery CAP.

TACAIR flew 22 LZ preparation sorties, including a smoke screen, and 55 TACAIR sorties were applied in a close air support role. Two battalions remained north of the My Chanh River overnight, but withdrew inside friendly lines on 25 May. An important factor in the overall success of TACAIR in this operation was the USAF FACs' overall familiarity with the maneuver and its objectives. By direction of General Truong, FACs and the Division ALO advisor had been present during the planning stages of the operation. <sup>151/</sup>

The enemy, despite their recent heavy losses and the harassment of the VNMC counterattack, renewed their attacks on 25 May and soon the entire northern front was again engaged in heavy combat. Using human wave tactics and supported by artillery and mortar fire, the NVA crossed the My Chanh River. A fierce battle raged, often involving hand-to-hand combat. In many cases, the NVA used superior numbers to overrun VNMC positions. Still, the front did not break and reinforcements were quickly

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shifted to plug gaps or weakened positions. Since most of the line held against the onslaught, the enemy masses were vulnerable to the waves of VNAF and U.S. TACAIR sorties that continually swept the area. FACs, in constant contact with ground commanders, directed the TACAIR and spotted for ARVN and NGF artillery fire. Meanwhile, additional FACs flew over hostile areas in attempts to discover the locations of enemy artillery positions. When pinpointed, the big 130mm guns were silenced by TACAIR strikes. The NVA, whose conventional attack strategy was effectively thwarted by the ground/air team, suffered heavy casualties.

By noon, 29 May, no enemy forces remained south of the My Chanh River. Although the battle was not over, the NVA forces had been humbled and forced back. <sup>152/</sup>

Within a span of 10 days, the allied forces had withstood two major enemy thrusts on the northern defense line. Clearly, with the availability of TACAIR and effectively-employed ARVN and NGF artillery support, resolute ground troops were fully capable of defeating the NVA. This awareness raised the morale of all RVNAF units in MR I.

Air operations continued to play a vital role in the MR I battle area at the start of June. In the north, VNMC and Ranger units cleared the area of the few NVA stragglers remaining after the NVA's end of May attack. In the west, Lam Son 72 operations continued to flush the enemy out of positions. Enemy ground attacks on the northern defensive line and against positions west of Hue were scattered and ineffective during the first week of June. <sup>153/</sup>

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The enemy strove to build up supplies for attacks on the defensive fronts. They sought desperately to regain the upper hand and carry the battle toward Hue. Whenever the NVA troops massed for an attack, however, Arc Light, TACAIR, and artillery fire saturated the area. Friendly units repeatedly found evidence of the potent U.S. and VNAF bombing. On 9 June, for example, a BDA sweep of a B-52 strike area near FSB Bastogne discovered 60 enemy bodies and significant quantities of abandoned enemy supplies and equipment, including 14 crew served weapons, 24 individual weapons, 2,000 pounds of TNT, 712 rounds of 82mm mortar, 402 B-40 rockets, 10,000 rounds of AAA, and 20,000 rounds of AK-47 ammunition. <sup>154/</sup>

Just as Lam Son 72 pressured the enemy forces west of Hue, the VNMC continued their series of limited-objective operations to the north. On 8 June, the VNMC units pushed north 5 km into Quang Tri Province. The operation lasted two days and resulted in 235 enemy killed, 65 weapons captured (including one SA-7 missile), and three tanks destroyed. On 18 June, VNMC units again pushed north, this time progressing 8 km. The Marines reported 110 enemy KIA and 15 rockets and four SA-7 missiles captured. <sup>155/</sup>

The only major enemy-initiated action occurred on 21 June against friendly positions, along the My Chanh River, south and east of FSB Nancy. An enemy ground force of armor and infantry attacked VNMC positions for three days. However, supported by U.S. and VNAF TACAIR, and ARVN artillery, the VNMC lines held, and the enemy suffered severe losses, including 259 KIA, 123 WIA, 16 MIA. <sup>156/</sup>

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In the western sector, airpower struck against enemy positions on 22 June. Ninety-three Arc Light sorties were flown in the eastern portion of the A Shau Valley and in areas west of Hue. Forty-four VNAF and 203 U.S. TACAIR sorties struck in the same target areas and destroyed 10 tanks, six 130mm guns, and nine trucks.<sup>157/</sup>

The RVNAF continued to set the tempo of combat activity. The enemy's repeated efforts to regain the initiative were totally ineffective. On 28 June, when MR I Hq initiated a counteroffensive to the north, NVA units were forced into a defensive role as allied troops advanced across the My Chanh River in an expansion of Operation Lam Son 72.<sup>158/</sup> Arc Light strikes and NGF pounded the advance area and waves of TACAIR flew overhead to provide close air support. The Airborne Division moved north along Route 1 in a zone extending to the high ground on the west. The VNMC pushed north, flanking the Airborne, on the coastal side of Route 1. The battle to retake Quang Tri Province was underway; the defense of Hue was over.

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CHAPTER VII

THE AFTERMATH

Airpower and the revitalized South Vietnamese ground forces halted the NVA invasion of MR I and successfully maintained the defensive approaches to Hue. At the end of the invasion's first 90 days, the NVA/VC forces held most of the gains achieved in the first month of fighting. As the offensive moved into July, the question was no longer whether the enemy could be stopped, but how effectively the RVNAF could conduct an offensive campaign and eject the enemy from MR I.

Acting against the advice of U.S. advisors, the RVNAF concentrated their counterattack on retaking Quang Tri City. The VNMC and Airborne paratroopers chose to directly engage the determined defenders of the Citadel instead of isolating the city and securing the surrounding countryside. The decision proved costly. The Airborne and Marines suffered thousands of casualties during their two and one half month struggle to recapture Quang Tri's Provincial Capital, the mark of the NVA's major victory. <sup>159/</sup>

The battle was hard-fought and extremely costly to both sides. For example, during the two weeks ending 9 September, over 1,300 enemy were killed in the VNMC area of operation alone, while the Marines suffered a like number of wounded and over 240 killed. More than 60 percent of the Marine casualties resulted from the NVA's ability to target the Quang Tri City area with an almost constant mortar and artillery barrage. Daily,

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over 800 rounds of 130mm poured in on friendly positions, with occasional daily peaks of 10,000 to 15,000 rounds of mixed incoming artillery. <sup>160/</sup>

U.S. airpower was not employed during the initial days of the RVNAF siege of Quang Tri City. The RVNAF desired to oust the NVA on their own and thus achieve a greater psychological impact. Also, 7AF was reluctant to employ its forces in the devastation of a South Vietnamese city. However, General Truong, after realizing that victory required U.S. air resources, requested and received the TACAIR and B-52 strikes that forced the NVA to give up the battered city. Finally, on 16 September, battle-weary Marines raised the red and gold South Vietnamese flag atop the Quang Tri Citadel to officially end one of the bloodiest episodes of the war. Despite this military accomplishment, the NVA still retained most of Quang Tri Province and began a steady shelling of friendly positions that was to continue for months. <sup>161/</sup>

In an assessment of the impact of air operations on the NVA invasion, General John W. Vogt, 7th Air Force Commander, saw the successful interdiction campaign as the key to the allied effort: <sup>162/</sup>

The thing that stopped them was the most thorough air interdiction program of the war. The weather was absolutely clear during the period 1-31 May. We saw the enemy attempting to move large convoys of trucks, towed weapons, ammunition carriers, and armored personnel carriers down the route packages of Highway 1 in broad daylight in the face of air superiority.

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The 7th Air Force Plan during May called for continuous interdiction of the major travel routes in Quang Tri Province. FACs checked assigned surveillance areas on a daily basis. Any sign of enemy movement resulted in air strikes. U.S. Army General Frederick C. Weyand, Commander of USMACV as of 12 October 1972, cited the tremendous effectiveness of air-power in destroying enemy supplies and equipment, in interdicting the enemy staging and supply system, and in locating and destroying heavily camouflaged artillery. In his overall judgment of the campaign, General Weyand asserted that it appeared <sup>163/</sup>

unlikely that the South Vietnamese forces could have stopped the invasion without the tremendous effectiveness of airpower. . . . [He could not] see how anybody in any service, could question the decisive role played by the fixed-wing gunships, TACAIR, and the B-52s. . . .

Thus, in MR I, as in other areas of South Vietnam, air power and a revitalized SVN ground defense proved to be decisive factors in repelling the 1972 NVA offensive.

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APPENDIX I

ENEMY INITIATED INCIDENTS, LOSSES (KIA), WEAPONS CAPTURED

MR I--JAN TO JUN 1972\*

<u>Incidents</u>	<u>Jan</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Apr</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>Jun</u>
Attacks by fire	19	18	57	130	89	204
Assaults	15	27	29	82	90	83
Ambushes	1	4	1	0	2	2
Harassment (a)	80(28)	59(72)	178(57)	182(112)	229(171)	269(173)
Intimidation (b)	26	62	40	34	19	26
Sabotage	1	0	4	1	4	5
Propaganda	2	3	3	0	0	0
AA Fire	<u>49</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>58</u>	<u>33</u>
Total	193	173	345	446	491	622

(a) Attacks by fire of less than 20 rounds and/or small arms harassing fire, as defined by MACV Dir 381-21, in parentheses.

(b) Formerly Terrorism (see MACV Dir 335-2, dated 31 July 1971).

	<u>Jan</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Apr</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>Jun</u>
<u>KIA</u>	1592	1455	2826	10531	8353	6534

WEAPONS

Crew served	46	57	148	646	551	605
Individual	553	462	687	1711	1578	1489

\*Periodic Intelligence Report (PERINTREP) (S) Dir/Intl, U.S.MACV, Jan to Jun 1972 (Monthly reports).

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APPENDIX II  
ATTACK SORTIES FLOWN--MR I

<u>Service/ Type Acft</u>	<u>March</u>		<u>April</u>					<u>Totals</u>
	<u>30</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	
<u>USAF</u>								
B-52	12	9	12	29	32	26	12	132
F-4	14	16	25	66	56	67	66	310
<u>USN</u>								
A-4	--	6	--	36	22	56	15	135
A-6	--	--	--	3	5	25	15	48
A-7	--	--	--	11	20	24	12	67
F-4	--	--	2	14	32	45	27	120
<u>VNAF</u>								
A-1	--	--	--	12	20	20	15	67
A-37	<u>26</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>--</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>108</u>
TOTALS	52	61	49	171	203	271	180	988

SOURCE: USMACV Strike Computer, MACDO-24, SEADAB, Subprogram 475.  
Computer retrieval for MR I based on all services and attack mission  
functions--strike, flak suppress, air interdiction, close air support,  
heavy bombardment, and munitions delivery.

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APPENDIX III

USAF COMBAT LOSSES IN MR I

<sup>a</sup>  
1 April-30 June 1972

<u>Date</u>	<u>Zulu Time</u>	<u>A/C Type</u>	<u>Mission Function</u>	<u>Cause of Hit</u>	<u>Crew Status</u>
2 Apr	0724	O-2A	FAC	Automatic Weapons (Unknown Type)	1 R
2 Apr	1002	EB-66	ECM	SA-2	5M/1R
3 Apr	0800	OV-10	SAR	SA-2	1M/1R
6 Apr	0939	HH-53	SAR	Ground Fire	6 M
7 Apr	0308	OV-10	FAC	SA-2	2 M
28 Apr	0505	F-4E	FAC	SA-2	2 R
1 May	0852	O-2A	FAC	SA-7 <sup>b</sup>	1 R
1 May	1052	A-1H	SAR	SA-7	1 R
2 May	0223	A-1E	SAR	SA-2	1 R
2 May	0223	A-1G	SAR	SA-2	1 R
5 May	0410	F-4E	FAC	AAA	2 R
19 May	0800	OV-10	FAC	Ground Fire	2 M
22 May	0118	F-4D	STK	SA-2	2 R
25 May	0805	OV-10	FAC	SA-7	2 R
26 May	0435	F-4D	FAC	AAA	2 R
18 Jun	1333	AC-130A	AR	SA-7	11M/3R
20 Jun	0725	A-1J	SAR	AAA	1 R
26 Jun	1130	O-2A	FAC	SA-7	2 M
29 Jun	1045	OV-10	FAC	SA-7	1K/1R
30 Jun	1008	OV-10	FAC	Ground Fire	1 M

a. No losses in MR I, January-March 1972.

b. First loss attributed to SA-7.

SOURCE: USMACV, MACDO-21, Working Paper, "Hits and Losses for USAF aircraft, 1 Jan 72 to 1 Jul 72" (C). Data based on SEADAB, 7AF Incident and Damage Rpt, and logs from 7AF Logistics Control Center.

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## FOOTNOTES

### CHAPTER I

1. Intvw (S), Capt David K. Mann with Gen John W. Vogt, Jr., Deputy COMUSMACV and Commander, 7AF, 12 Nov 72. (Hereafter cited as Gen Vogt Intvw.)

### CHAPTER II

2. Controlled American Sources, "Situation Report," FVS-29,177, 4 Apr 72 (S/NF), p. 1. (Hereafter cited as CAS Rpt); and USMACV, "PERINTREP," Feb 72 (S/NF), p. 1.

3. 7AF, Daily Intelligence Briefing (DIB), 9 Apr 72 (S/NF). (Hereafter cited as 7AF, DIB.)

4. USMACV, MACDI 12-41, "Captured Enemy Documents," Bulletin No. 49,787, 10 Aug 72. (C).

5. 7AF, DIB, 14 Apr 72 (S/NF).

6. USMACV, "PERINTREP," Jan 72 (S/NF), p. 1.

7. USMACV, "PERINTREP," Mar 72 (S/NF).

8. Office of Special Activities, "Enemy Order of Battle," AMEMB Saigon, RVN, undated (S/NF).

9. USMACV, "PERINTREP," Jan 72, Feb 72, Mar 72 (S/NF).

10. Project CHECO Rpt, The USAF Response to the Spring 1972 NVN Offensive: Situation and Redeployment, Oct 72 (S), p. 20. (Hereafter cited as USAF Response.) The information derived from this report is classified no higher than secret.

11. Information in this paragraph is based on U.S. Intelligence Sources: USMACV, "PERINTREP" and 7AF Weekly Air Intelligence Summary (WAIS) for the period Jan to Mar 72 (S/NF).

12. Appendix 1 (S).

13. USAF Response (S), pp. 8-15. Chapter II of this study provides a review of intelligence estimates of the military situation from unclassified and classified sources.

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14. USMACV, J-3 Historical Summary, March 72, "Combat Operations, MR I," 12 Apr 72 (C). (Hereafter cited as J-3 Summary.) Locations of ARVN Divisions: 1st Div. in Thua Thien Province, Hq at Camp Eagle near Hue; ARVN 2d Div. in Quang Nam, Quang Tin, and Quang Ngai Provinces, Hq at Chu Lai south of DaNang; and 3d Div in Quang Tri Province, Hq at Quang Tri Combat Base near Quang Tri City.
15. 1st Infantry Division (ARVN), "Significant Activities Report," 15 Apr 72 (C/NF), p. 6.
16. Debriefing Rpt by Col Hiliman Dickinson (USA), Senior Advisor 1st Inf Div (ARVN), inclusive dates: 23 May 71 to 21 May 72 (C/NF), p. 12.
17. Ibid.
18. 7AF, Commando Hunt VII, Jun 72, (S/NF), p. 15.
19. PACAF, "Air Intelligence Review" (AIR), PACAIR 2-72, 7 Apr 72 (S/NF).
20. 7AF, Commando Hunt VII, Jun 72 (S/NF), p. 231.
21. Interview (C), Capt David K. Mann with Maj Hall Smith, MACDO-231, Chief of Gunship Opns, 18 Aug 72.
22. 7AF, Commando Hunt VII, Jun 72 (S/NF), p. 148.

## CHAPTER III

23. USMACV, "PERINTREP," Apr 72 (S/NF), p. 1. Two divisions attacked Quang Tri Province and the third made an easterly push on Hue in Thua Thien Province.
24. Appendix 2 (C). This source provides a breakdown of the flown attack sorties by service during the first week of the offensive.
25. USMACV, Civil Operations for Rural Development Support (CORDS), "Operational Report for Period 30 Mar 1972 to 1 May 1972," 15 May 72 (C), P. 81. (Hereafter cited as CORDS Rpt.)
26. USMACV, MACJ-3 (Command Center), "Duty officer Log, 30 Mar to 6 Apr 72 (C). (Hereafter cited as MACV Log); and CORDS Rpt, Annex A (C), pp. 1-4.
27. Memo for the Record (C), Maj Jim R. Joy, USMC, Senior Advisor, Bde 147, VNMC, subj: After Action Report, 30 Mar-2 Apr 72, 10 Apr 72, pp. 3-4. (Hereafter cited as VNMC Rpt.) The ground beacon provided a fixed reference point for USAF fixed-wing gunship fire against enemy forces invisible from the air. Range and bearing were passed on to the gunship's fire control

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computer which determined an offset aiming point. The tactics and procedures of "Combat Rendezvous," the main beacon system used for both AC-119 and AC-130 aircraft in MR I, is discussed in Project CHECO Report, Pave Mace/Combat Rendezvous.

28. Ibid., p. 5.

29. AFAG, 3d ARVN Division ALO Advisor (Maj Brookbank), Special Rpt, "VNAF TACS and the Fall of Quang Tri," 31 Jul 72 (S/NF), p. 4. (Hereafter cited as Brookbank Rpt.) Combat Skyspot is an all weather day or night ground radar controlled bomb drop system. All Arc Light sorties utilized the Skyspot procedure which is also a backup for TACAIR strikes.

30. USMACV, MACJ3-08, "Report of Significant Activities," 2 Apr 72 (C), p. 1. This is a special report prepared for the American Ambassador, Saigon, RVN. (Hereafter cited as MACV, RSA.)

31. J-3 Summary, 17 May 72 (C), p. 25.

32. MACV, RSA, 4 Apr 72 (C), pp. 1-4.

33. CAS Rpt, FVS 29,211, 7 Apr 72 (S/NF), p. 1; and Appendix 2, 2 April-5 April 72 (C).

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34. CAS Rpt, FVS-29,197, 5 Apr 72 (S/NF), p. 1.

35. USMACV, MACJ3-08, "U.S., RVNAF and FWMAF Order of Battle," 17 Apr 72 (C); and Intvw (C), Capt David K. Mann with Maj Jim R. Joy, USMC, Senior Advisor, 147th Bde, VNMC, 11 Jun 72. (Hereafter cited as Joy Intvw.)

36. VNMC, 369th Bde, 2d Bn, "Critique of 2d Battalion," 8 May 72 (C). After Action Report prepared by Maj W. T. Sweeney, USMC. (Hereafter cited as Sweeney Rpt); RCAD, "Employment of Ranger Command in MR I," 12 Apr 72 (C). Memorandum for the Director and Special Assistant to COMUSMACV. (Hereafter cited as "Ranger Command"); and ACAD, "Combat Operations After Action," 8 Jun 72 (C). Rpt of the 1st Armor Bde for the period 1 Apr-2 May 72. (Hereafter cited as 1st Armor Bde Rpt.)

37. Rpt, Brig Gen Stan L. McClellan, Chief, AAG, to Brig Gen George S. Patton, Asst Commandant, USA Armor School, Fort Knox, Ky, subj: Activities of the 20th Tank Regiment and Enemy Tactics and Training, 22 May 72 (C). Period of Rpt is 31 Mar-28 Apr 72.

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38. AFAG, DOM, "VNAF Status Review," Apr 72 (S), p. A-13.
39. Project CHECO Southeast Asia Report (S), Direct Air Support in I Corps, July 1965-June 1969, 31 Aug 69.
40. AFAG, MACV ALO Advisors, VNAF Air Request Guide, 1972 (U), p. 2.
41. Brookbank Rpt (S/NF), p. 5.
42. Memo for the Record (C), G-2 Reconnaissance Advisor to Senior Marine Advisor, subj: Easter Offensive: personal evaluation 25 Apr 72. (Hereafter cited as Marine Evaluation.)
43. Brookbank Rpt (S/NF), p. 6.
44. Ibid., p. 7.
45. Ibid.
46. Appendix 3 (C).
47. Intvw (C), Capt David K. Mann with Maj Kenneth E. Ernest, 7AF, JRRC, 20 Aug 72; and JRRC Mission Rpt, Bat 21 (S).
48. Brookbank Rpt (S/NF), p. 7; and Joy Intvw (C).
49. Brookbank Rpt (S/NF), p. 9.
50. Ibid., p. 8.
51. Sub Unit One, 1st Air and Naval Gunfire Liaison Company (ANGLICO), "Command Chronology for the Period 1-30 Apr 1972," 30 May 72 (C), p. 6. (Hereafter cited as ANGLICO Rpt.)
52. Ibid., p. 7.
53. Intvw (C), Capt David K. Mann with Capt Ron Skow, USMC, Gunfire Liaison Officer (Hue), 13 Jun 72.
54. Intvw (C), Capt David K. Mann with Maj Sidletsky, Asst Opns Officer, 20 TASS, 16 Jun 72. (Hereafter cited as Sidletsky Intvw.)
55. CAS Rpt, FVS-29,231, 9 Apr 72 (S/NF).
56. CAS Rpt, FVS-29,243, 9 Apr 72 (S/NF).

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57. 7AF, DIB, 14 Apr 72 (S/NF); and CAS Rpt, FVS-29,276, 13 Apr 72 (S/NF).
58. CAS Rpt, FVS-29,203, 6 Apr 72; CAS Rpt, FVS-29,211, 7 Apr 72 (S/NF); and Monthly Operations Summary (MOS), DCS OPNS, Hq 8AF, Apr 72 (S).
59. CAS Rpt, FVS-29,248, 11 Apr 72 (S/NF).
60. MACV Log, 8 Apr-9 Apr 72, item 49 (C).
61. Marine Evaluation (C), p. 5.
62. The MK-36 destructor mine is a 560 pound fragmentation and blast type of area denial mine which can be delivered by F-4 aircraft at low level or using high angle dive. Its MK-75 magnetic influence fuze is activated when the target begins to withdraw from the range of influence of the fuze.
63. Brookbank Rpt (S/NF), pp. 8, 13.
64. Ibid., p. 12.
65. PACAF, "Air Intelligence Review," PACAIR 3-72, 25 Apr 72 (S/NF), p. 39.
66. 7AF, DIB, 4 Apr 72 (S/NF).
67. CAS Rpt, FVS-29,243, 9 Apr 72 (S/NF).
68. USMACV, MACOI, Wire Service Copy, Intvw, Craig Whitney, New York Times Correspondent with Lt Col John P. O'Gorman, Cmdr, 421 TFS (DaNang AB), 7 Apr 72 (U).
69. CAS Rpt, FVS-29,306, 17 Apr 72 (S/NF); and 7AF, DIB, 15 Apr 72 (S/NF).
70. 7AF, DIB, 6 Apr-26 Apr 72 (S/NF).
71. Brookbank Rpt (S/NF), p. 11.
72. Sweeney Rpt (C), p. 5.
73. Sidletsky Intvw (C).
74. 20th TASS (DaNang AB), Historical Data Record, Jan-Mar 72 (C), pp. 6-7.
75. 14th TRS (Udorn RTAFB), Historical Data Record, Mar-Jun 72 (C).
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- 77. Sweeney Rpt (C), p. 2.
- 78. Brookbank Rpt (S/NF), p. 11.
- 79. USMACV, PERINTREP, " Apr 72 (S/NF), p. 1.
- 80. J-3 Summary, 17 May 72 (C), p. 26.

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- 81. USMACV, "PERINTREP," Apr 72 (S/NF), p. 1; and CAS Rpt FVS-29,446, 27 Apr 72 (S/NF).
- 82. Joy Intvw (C); and VNMC Rpt, 3 May 72 (C), pp. 1-5.
- 83. Brookbank Rpt (S/NF), p. 14.
- 84. Ibid.
- 85. 7AF, DIB, 29 Apr 72 (S/NF); and CORDS Rpt, Annex A (C), p. 17.
- 86. Intvw (C), Capt David K. Mann with Maj Dennis M. Biggs, I-DASC, Hue, Senior Duty Officer, 14 Jun 72. (Hereafter cited as Biggs Intvw.)
- 87. Brookbank Rpt (S/NF), p. 15.
- 88. VNMC Rpt, 3 May 72 (C), p. 8.
- 89. CAS Rpt, FVS-29,494, 30 Apr 72 (S/NF). The SA-7 is a light weight, portable, ground launched IR homing missile system. The missile weight is 20.3 lbs. Warhead total weight is 2.6 lbs with approximately 7 lbs of explosive.
- 90. USAF Tactical Fighter Weapons Center, Tactical Analysis Bulletin, "SA-7 Tactics Conference Report," pp. 1-27; and "SA-7 Update," pp. 28-29 (S/NF), 1 Jul 72. These reports identify the SA-7 threat, available countermeasures, the mission impact, and recommended tactics for jet fighters, slow FACs, tactical airlift, gunships, and helicopter type aircraft.
- 91. Brookbank Rpt (S/NF), p. 16.
- 92. Pacific Stars and Stripes, 30 Apr 72, p. 24.
- 93. CAS Rpt, FVS-29,472, 29 Apr 72 (S/NF).

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94. 1st Armor Bde Rpt (C), p. 32.
95. CAS Rpt, FVS-29,478, 29 Apr 72 (S/NF).
96. Msg 010750Z Aug 72; from AMCONSUL DaNang to AMEMBASSY Saigon, subj: Convoy of Death - Quang Tri Province (C).
97. VNMC Rpt, 3 May 72 (C), p. 13; and Joy Intvw (C).
98. J-3 Summary, 17 May 72 (C), p. 25.
99. USMACV, "PERINTREP," May 72 (S/NF), p. 7.
100. 1st Armor Bde Rpt (C), p. 32.
101. Biggs Intvw (C).
102. Brookbank Rpt (S/NF), p. 18 and Sidletsky Intvw (C).
103. Msg 011911Z May 72; from OL-A, 3 ARRG to Hq ARRS; OPREP 3 (S).
104. Brookbank Rpt (S/NF), p. 18.
105. Msn Rpt, 37ARRS, Msn No. A-3-046, Jolly Green 71, 1 May 72 (C).
106. Msn Rpt, 37 ARRS, Msn No. A-3-046, Jolly Green 65, 1 May 72 (C).
107. Msg 010905Z May 72 (C) and Msg 040947Z May 72 (S), from OL-A, 3 ARRG to Hq ARRS; OPREP 3; and Historical Data Record, I DASC/I T ASD, 1 Apr-30 Jun 72 (S). Although the initial reports indicated 129 saves, a later msg changed the official total to 132. The breakdown was as follows: U.S. personnel, 80 (61 Army, 10 Marine, 7 Air Force, 1 Navy, 1 Civilian); ARVN personnel, 51; and 1 Korean civilian.
108. Memo for the Record (C), Maj Kenneth L. Teel, USA, Senior Advisor, 5th Ranger Group, subj: Activities Rpt, 5th Ranger Group, 19 Apr-4 May 72. (Hereafter cited as Teel Rpt.)
109. Ibid.
110. VNMC Rpt, 3 May 72 (C), p. 20.
111. MACV Log, 2 May-3 May (C), item 31.
112. Pacific Stars and Stripes, "Retreating Troops Bitter," 4 May 72, p. 6.



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- 113. Brookbank Rpt (S/NF), p. 19.
- 114. CORDS Rpt (C), p. 3.
- 115. CAS Rpt, FVS-29,541, 3 May 72 (S/NF).
- 116. Brookbank Rpt (S/NF), p. 20; Teep Rpt (C), p. 4.; and Joy Intvw (C).
- 117. VNMC Rpt (C), 3 May 72; 1st Armor Bde Rpt (C); "Ranger Command" (C); Brookbank Rpt (S/NF); ANGLICO Rpt, 1-30 Apr 72 (C); CORDS Rpt (C); and Gen Vogt Intvw (S). These sources all make reference to the breakdown of ARVN 3d Division command and control.
- 118. Pacific Stars and Stripes, "The Cost of Being a General," 4 May 72, p. 6.
- 119. CAS Rpt, FVS-29,512, 1 May 72 (S/NF).

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- 120. CAS Rpt, FVS-29,839, 26 May 72 (S/NF), p. 1; and 7AF, DIB, 6 May 72 (S/NF).
- 121. USMACV, "PERINTREP," May 72 and Jun 72 (S/NF).
- 122. CAS Rpt, FVS-29,578, 5 May 72 (S/NF).
- 123. 7AF, DIB, 4 May 72 (C); and Joy Intvw (C).
- 124. Gen Vogt Intvw (S).
- 125. Historical Data Record, I-DASC/I TASC, 1 Apr-30 Jun 72 (S).
- 126. AFAG, "Staff Digest," 21-27 May 72 (C), p. 2-1.
- 127. Biggs Intvw (C).
- 128. Gen Vogt Intvw (S).
- 129. 7AF, Command Briefing, 29 Nov 72 (S), p. 11.
- 130. Gen Vogt Intvw (S).
- 131. 7AF, SDO Night Mission Summary, 2-3 May 72 (S).
- 132. CAS Rpt, FVS-29,593, 6 May 72 (S/NF).

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133. 7AF, SDO Day Mission Summary, 6 May 72 (S).
134. CAS Rpt, FVS-29,616 and 622, 9 May 72 (S/NF).
135. Gen Vogt Intvw (S).
136. Ltr, from Senior Marine Advisor to Cmr, FRAC, subj: location and destruction of enemy artillery, 17 Jun 72 (C).
137. Intvw (C), Capt David K. Mann with Maj James Beaumaster, MACDO-231, Operations Staff Officer, 18 Aug 72; and Gen Vogt Intvw (S).
138. Intvw (C), Capt David K. Mann with Col Robert Hyatt, USA, Senior Advisor, VN Airborne Div, 13 Jun 72.
139. CAS Rpt, FVS-29,675, 13 May 72 (S/NF); and Joy Intvw (C).
140. After Action Rpt, ALO to VNMC, subj: Operation MELLWOOD, 20 May 72 (C/NF).
141. 7AF, DIB, 15 May 72 (S/NF).
142. Significant Activities Rpt, Col George A. Millener, Jr., USA, Senior Advisor, 1st ARVN Div to CG, FRAC, 10 Jun 72 (C), p. 7.
143. History of Task Force Alpha, 1 Apr-30 Jun 72 (S), pp. 15-16. Task Force Alpha was the filter point for sensor information. It was organized in 1967 under the Command of 7AF at Tan Son Nhut AB and later moved to Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand.
144. Msg (S), 100700Z Jun 72, 7AF to COMUSMACV, subj: Acoustic Sensor Gun Locating; Msg (S), 111130Z Jun 72, 7AF to TFA, subj: ACUGUN Sensor Implant; Msg (S), 220745Z Jun 72, TFA to 7AF, subj: Acoustic Gun Locator System Limitations/Capabilities.
145. History of Task Force Alpha, 1 Apr-30 Jun 72 (S), p. 33.
146. Gen Vogt Intvw (S).
147. MACV Log, 20-21 May (C), item 23; and CAS Rpt, FVS-29,792, 22 May 72 (S/NF).
148. CAS Rpt, "The Military Situation in South Vietnam" 17-26 May 72 (S).
149. After Action Report, ALO to VNMC, subj: Operation SONG THANH 6/72, 29 May 72 (C/NF).

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150. Working Paper, Office of the Senior Marine Advisor, Operation SONG THANH 6/72, 23 May 72 (S).

151. Intvw (C), Capt David K. Mann with Maj Loren L. Buyher, VNMC ALO Advisor, 11 Jun 72.

152. CAS Rpt, FVS-29,868, 29 May 72 (S/NF).

153. CAS Rpt, Vietnam Weekly Brief, 1-7 Jun 72 (S).

154. CAS Rpt, Military Situation in South Vietnam, 8-14 Jun 72 (S).

155. Ibid., and USMACV, DO Historical Summary for June 1972, MACDO-43, 18 Jul 72 (S), p. 23. (Hereafter cited as DO Summary, Jun 72.) Data derived from the Combat Operations section of this rpt is classified no higher than confidential.

156. DO Summary, Jun 72 (C), p. 24.

157. CAS Rpt, 231600Z Jun 72 (S).

158. USMACV, "PERINTREP," Jun 72 (S/NF), p. 1.

159. Gen Vogt Intvw (S).

160. 7AF, Command Briefing, 29 Nov 72 (S), p. 14.

161. Gen Vogt Intvw (S).

162. Ibid.

163. Quoted in Edgar Ulsamer, "Airpower Halts an Invasion," Air Force Magazine, Sep 72, p. 61.

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## GLOSSARY

AAA	Antiaircraft Artillery
ABCCC	Airborne Command and Control Center
ABF	Attack by Fire
ACUGUN	Acoustic Gun Location System
ALO	Air Liaison Officer
ANGLICO	Airborne Naval Gunfire Liaison and Coordination
AO	Area of Operation
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
BDA	Bomb Damage Assessment, Battle Damage Assessment
COMUSMACV	Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
CORLOC	Cross Correlation for Target Location System
DASC	Direct Air Support Center
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone
FAC	Forward Air Controller
FEBA	Forward Edge of Battle Area
FSB	Fire Support Base
FSCC	Fire Support Coordination Center
IR	Infrared
JGS	South Vietnam Joint General Staff
JRCC	Joint Rescue Coordination Center
KBA	Killed by Air
KIA	Killed in Action
LGB	Laser Guided Bomb
LORAN	Long Range Navigation
LZ	Landing Zone
MIA	Missing in Action
MR	Military Region
NGF	Naval Gunfire
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
NVN	North Vietnam(ese)
PF	Popular Forces
PW	Prisoner of War

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QTCB	Quang Tri Combat Base
RECCE	Reconnaissance
RF	Regional Forces
RVN	Republic of Vietnam
RVNAF	Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces
SAM	Surface-to-Air Missile
SAR	Search and Rescue
SVN	South Vietnam(ese)
TACAIR	Tactical Air
TACP	Tactical Air Control Party
TACS	Tactical Air Control System
TASS	Tactical Air Support Squadron
TIC	Troops in Contact
TOC	Tactical Operations Center
VC	Viet Cong
VNAF	South Vietnamese Air Force
VNMC	South Vietnamese Marine Corps
WIA	Wounded in Action

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
HEADQUARTERS PACIFIC AIR FORCES  
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96553

*Noted 9 Apr 73*



*Ent*

REPLY TO  
ATTN OF:

DOAD


6 April 1973

SUBJECT Project CHECO Report, "The 1972 Invasion of Military Region I: Fall of Quang Tri and Defense of Hue" (U)

TO: All Holders of Subject Report

1. Change classification to SECRET/NOFORN.

2. Reference quote by Gen Vogt on page 3. Change line 7, which reads ". . . were not able to attack . . ." to read ". . . were now able to attack . . ."

  
JACKIE C. BETHEA, Captain, USAF  
CHECO/CORONA HARVEST Division  
Directorate of Operations Analysis  
DCS/Operations